

## Petrarch and St. Augustine

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# Petrarch and St. Augustine

Classical Scholarship, Christian Theology  
and the Origins of the Renaissance in Italy

*By*

Alexander Lee



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For my parents,  
Chris and Ingrid Lee,  
with love.



CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ..... ix

Introduction ..... 1

I    A Question of Attribution ..... 31

II   Stoicism and ‘Augustinianism’ in the *Secretum* ..... 63

III  All in the Mind: *Otium* in the *De Otio Religioso* ..... 113

IV   The Hidden Life of Solitude ..... 159

V    The Holy Passion of Friendship ..... 229

VI   Eloquence and Philosophy ..... 277

Epilogue ..... 351

Bibliography ..... 357

Index ..... 375





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## INTRODUCTION

Petrarch is commonly viewed as the father of humanism, and as a harbinger of the Renaissance in Italy. Viewed as a precursor of the classical enthusiasms of figures including Coluccio Salutati and Lorenzo Valla, and of the self-consciousness of those such as Marsilio Ficino, Petrarch is held to have looked back affectionately at the 'pure radiance' of antiquity, and to have looked forward to an age of rebirth and renewal, the advent of which he endeavoured to assist.<sup>1</sup> An avid classical scholar, he reconstructed the surviving decades of Livy's *Ab urbe condita* while still a young man,<sup>2</sup> and discovered not only Cicero's letters to Atticus in the library of Verona Cathedral in 1345,<sup>3</sup> but also Cicero's previously unknown oration *Pro Archia* in Liège in 1333.<sup>4</sup> His works bristle with his enthusiasm for classical Latinity. As his contemporaries were quick to appreciate, he strove to emulate the written style of the classics, and peppered his prose works with quotations from ancient literature.<sup>5</sup> In his choice of genres and subject matter, too, he turned often to antiquity, and Cicero, Seneca, Virgil, Livy, and Valerius Maximus—amongst others—all exerted a considerable

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<sup>1</sup> *Africa*, IX, 451–5; the text of the epic is found in *Africa*, ed. N. Festa, Edizione Nazionale delle Opere di Francesco Petrarca (Florence, 1926). For the classic interpretation of this passage, see T. E. Mommsen, 'Petrarch's Conception of the "Dark Ages",' *Speculum* 17 (1942): 226–42; see also the responses A. Lee, 'Petrarch, Rome and the "Dark Ages",' in *Early Modern Rome, 1341–1667* (Ferrara: SATE, forthcoming); idem, 'Petrarch and the "Dark Ages": A Reappraisal,' (forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> G. Billanovich, 'Petrarch and the Textual Tradition of Livy,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 14/3–4 (1951): 137–208; E. H. Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch* (Chicago and London, 1961), 16–17.

<sup>3</sup> *Fam.* XXI, 10; XXIV, 3; *Var.* 25; P. de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Paris, 1907), 1:222. All references to the *Familiars* in this study are drawn from *Le Familiari*, ed. V. Rossi, Edizione Nazionale delle Opere di Francesco Petrarca, 4 vols., (Florence, 1933–42), unless otherwise stated.

<sup>4</sup> *Fam.* XIII, 6; de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme*, 1:41, 221–2; Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 10; N. Mann, *Petrarch* (Oxford, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Franco Sacchetti, *Il libro delle rime*, ed. A. Chiari (Bari, 1936), 179–83; Leonardo Bruni, *Vita di Dante e del Petrarca*, in A. Solerti, ed., *Autobiografie e vite de' maggiori scrittori italiani* (Milan, 1903), 115. See also Coluccio Salutati's letter to Roberto Guidi, Count of Battifolle, written on 16 August 1374; English translation in D. Thompson and A. F. Nagel, eds. and trans., *The Three Crowns of Florence. Humanist Assessments of Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio* (New York, 1972), 3–13. For a discussion of this letter, see, for example, B. G. Kohl, 'Mourners of Petrarch,' in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later. A Symposium*, ed. A. Scaglione (Chapel Hill and Chicago, 1975), 340–52, here 347–9; A von Martin, *Coluccio Salutati und das humanistische Lebensideal* (Leipzig, 1916), 17–21.

influence over the shape of Petrarch's works. Drawing succour from the ancient classics in this manner, Petrarch is often presented as having been concerned with the development of the modern concept of the individual and the subjective exploration of the psyche.

Petrarch's interest in the classics was, however, by no means reflective of a narrow focus, and his intellectual development was neither linear nor lacking uncertainty. Nor, indeed, is it meaningful to suggest either that Petrarch's writings were anything other than Christian in character, or that his reading of the classics can be understood without an appreciation of his debt to the patristic and medieval traditions. He had read the works of the Church Fathers and the lives of the medieval saints with considerable enthusiasm,<sup>6</sup> and the writings of St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, and St. Gregory the Great seem to have appealed to his interest more than most.<sup>7</sup> But of all Christian writers, St. Augustine commanded Petrarch's most profound respect and was the object of his most lasting devotion. Petrarch included Augustine's works alongside those of Cicero, Virgil, Seneca, and Horace on his list of his favourite books,<sup>8</sup> and the saint's writings were a constant point of reference throughout Petrarch's life. As he himself indicated later in his life, Petrarch recognised that St. Augustine's debt to the pagan classics foreshadowed his own reading of classical literature,<sup>9</sup> and the saint's writings were often a crucial guide in determining how to interpret particular passages in Virgil or Cicero, for example.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Petrarch saw Augustine as a model to be emulated, and it is evident that saint's account of his conversion experience in particular had a deep impact on Petrarch's attitude towards his own inner struggles. It was the *Confessiones* that called Petrarch to introspection on the summit of Mt. Ventoux in April 1336,<sup>11</sup> and, in writing the consciously confessional *Secretum*, Petrarch cast a literary representation of Augustine 'in the role not so much of a father confessor as of an *alter ego*: himself as he felt he

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme*, 2:189–238.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. *Fam.* I, 2, 13; XXI, 14, 12.

<sup>8</sup> See B. L. Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (Rome, 1955), 117–37.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. *Fam.* II, 9.

<sup>10</sup> In the fourth letter of the *Sine nomine*, for example, Petrarch uses Augustine, *Sermo* 105 as a template for the interpretation of Virgil, *Aen.* I, 276–9; IX, 448–9. For the text of the *Sine nomine*, see Petrarca's "Buch ohne namen" und die päpstliche Kurie, ed. P. Piur (Halle, 1925).

<sup>11</sup> *Fam.* IV, 1. Text ed. E. Bianchi in Petrarch, *Prose*, ed. G. Martellotti, P. G. Ricci, and E. Bianchi (Milan and Naples, 1955), 830–43; also Petrarch, *Ascent of Mount Ventoux: The Familiaris IV, 1*, *New Commented Edition*, ed. R. Lokaj, *Scriptores Latini* 23 (Rome, 2006).

ought to be.<sup>12</sup> But Augustine's works provided Petrarch with much more than an authority for the study of the pagan classics and a sympathetic image of the saint himself: in his writings, Petrarch also found a body of moral theology which could not but inspire him. For Petrarch, Augustine the theologian remained 'ille vir ingenio',<sup>13</sup> 'vir quidam sanctissimus et divino ingenio',<sup>14</sup> and, above all else, 'holy and venerable'.<sup>15</sup>

Scholars have long recognised that Petrarch's relationship with St. Augustine is central to our understanding of his works, and is a vital barometer not only of his intellectual development, but also of his reputed modernity. Standing between the classical world and Petrarch's own self, St. Augustine's works have been recognised as having offered him an insight not only into the appreciation of the literature of antiquity, but also into his quest for virtue and the conflicts which raged in his soul. There can, indeed, be little doubt that an appreciation of the manner in which Petrarch conceived of the relationship between his passion for classical antiquity, his exploration of his inner struggles, and his life-long enthusiasm for St. Augustine's works is central to our comprehension of the nature of his humanism, and of the trajectory of his thought.

Yet while St. Augustine's importance to our appreciation of Petrarch's thought has been acknowledged since the beginnings of modern critical scholarship, the manner in which the saint's writings impacted upon his approach both to classical philosophy and to his moral condition has been viewed through the lens of particular constructions of his humanism. Although it would, of course, be invidious to pretend that scholarly attitudes towards Petrarch's humanism and towards his relationship with St. Augustine have not developed considerably over the last 150 years, St. Augustine's influence has commonly taken a back seat to his humanistic interests, and the impact of the saint's thought on the *content* of Petrarch's engagement with moral questions has been undervalued. Seen above all else as a pioneer of the humanist movement in Italy, Petrarch's relationship with the pagan classics tends to take precedence over his absorption of Augustine's theology, and his preoccupation with literary imitation often occludes or obscures the analysis of his profound interest in Christian ethics. As a consequence of the primacy accorded to his humanism, scholars have commonly seen St. Augustine as having been the object

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<sup>12</sup> N. Mann, *Petrarch* (Oxford, 1984), 13–14.

<sup>13</sup> *Fam.* XVIII, 3, 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Fam.* XXIV, 6, 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Fam.* XIX, 18, 2: '... per sacrum et venerabile Augustini ducis tui nomen...'

of experiential identification and a legitimising authority for Petrarch's interest in the ancient classics, but little more. Where Petrarch has been acknowledged as having looked to St. Augustine's works for inspiration in matters of moral philosophy, there has been a tendency to believe that Petrarch either 'misunderstood' the bishop of Hippo's thought, or drew on the saint's theology in an inconsistent and equivocal manner. This being so, the role played by St. Augustine in determining Petrarch's relationship with later humanist thought has generally been overlooked, and his impact on subsequent generations has been viewed principally in terms of his literary practices and his imitation of the ancient classics.

Building on the Romantic impulse which had driven Ugo Foscolo and Francesco De Sanctis to present Petrarch as a poet who valued emotions, sensibilities, literary study and the ideal of classical beauty highly, but who employed his intellect as an auxiliary to his other faculties rather than as an analytical tool,<sup>16</sup> the earliest historians of the Renaissance conceived of Petrarch's humanism as an enterprise which prioritised the revival of classical antiquity and the subjective exploration of the psyche. Jacob Burckhardt was, in this respect, somewhat representative. On the one hand, Burckhardt contended that Petrarch owed his importance to the humanists to 'the fact that he was a kind of living representative of antiquity, that he imitated all styles of classical poetry, [and] endeavoured by his voluminous historical and philosophical writings not to supplant but to make known the works of the ancients...'<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, 'we cannot fail to admire the marvellous abundance of pictures of the inmost

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<sup>16</sup> U. Foscolo, *Saggi e discorsi critici. Saggi sul Petrarca, Discorso sul testo del 'Decameron', Scritti minori su poeti italiani e stranieri (1821–1826)*, ed. C. Foligno, Edizione Nazionale delle Opere di Ugo Foscolo 10 (Florence, 1953); F. De Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. N. Gallo, introd. G. Ficara (Turin, 1996); idem, *Saggio critico sul Petrarca* (Naples, 1869). Foscolo's essays were originally published privately, and were subsequently reprinted in the *Quarterly Review*, before being issued once more in 1823. The most invaluable study of Foscolo remains D. Bianchi, 'Studi del Foscolo sul Petrarca,' in *Studi sul Foscolo, a cura dell'Università di Pavia nel primo centenario della morte del poeta* (Turin, 1927), 451–524. For a useful discussion of Foscolo's scholarship and poetry, see also C. Naselli, *Il Petrarca nell'Ottocento* (Naples, 1923), 189–99, 389–406. For De Sanctis' understanding of Petrarch, see, for example, F. Calitti, '«Il giornale dell'amore»: De Sanctis legge Petrarca,' in *Il Petrarchismo nel Settecento e nell'Ottocento*, ed. S. Gentili and L. Trenti (Rome, 2006), 215–36; V. Titone, 'Il Petrarca e la critica del De Sanctis,' *Critica vecchia e nuova* (Florence, 1932), 11–84; C. Tralbalza, 'Burckhardt e De Sanctis nella critica petrarchesca,' *Dipanature critiche* (Bologna, 1920), 7–38.

<sup>17</sup> J. Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien. Ein Versuch* (Leipzig, 1860); all quotations are taken from the translated edition *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middelmore (London, 1995), here 130.

soul—descriptions of moments of joy and sorrow which must have been thoroughly his own, since no-one before him gives us anything of the kind, and on which his significance rests for his country and for the world.<sup>18</sup> In this, St. Augustine played only a limited role, and his importance could be understood in terms of the extent to which Petrarch felt his inner struggles reflected in the saint's account of his own path to conversion. It is only in passing that Burckhardt mentions that Petrarch drew out his copy of the *Confessiones* when 'his whole life, with all its follies rose before his mind' at the summit of Mt. Ventoux.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, for Georg Voigt—whose *Der Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums* was published the year before Burckhardt's *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*—Petrarch's 'humanistic' preoccupation with the revival of antiquity and introspective self-discovery allowed St. Augustine's influence to be felt only at the level of experiential identification and performative inspiration. In Voigt's eyes, classical antiquity—especially the study of eloquence and the writings of Cicero—was an intrinsic part of Petrarch's life, but in isolation, this would have given everything an unnatural colouring had he not struck out in search of his own voice and felt a strong consciousness of the tension between his inner life and external reality.<sup>20</sup> Especially in the *Confessiones*, Augustine offered Petrarch an insight into how to approach these inner struggles, and revealed the nature of his own feelings to him.<sup>21</sup> For Voigt, therefore, Augustine anchored Petrarch's enthusiasm for antiquity to his interior torment. But in a comparable manner to Burckhardt, Voigt held that it was the experiential and performative elements of Augustine's writings which appealed to Petrarch: while Petrarch saw the saint as an archetype of his own experiences and a model for the literary representation of his personal quest for virtue, there was no sense in which Augustine's theology exerted an influence comparable to that of classical thought.

Despite the waning of the Romantic sentiments which had dominated much nineteenth-century scholarship, the legacy of *ottocento* thought proved enduring, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, Petrarch continued to be portrayed as a humanistic poet who was dedicated to the

<sup>18</sup> Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 203.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 193–4.

<sup>20</sup> G. Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Altertums, oder das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1859); references relate to the 3rd ed. (repr. Berlin, 1960). Here, see Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Altertums*, 1:69. Cf. G. Körting, *Petrarca's Leben und Werke* (Leipzig, 1878); *idem*, *Geschichte der Literatur Italiens im Zeitalter der Renaissance* (Leipzig, 1884).

<sup>21</sup> Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Altertums*, 1:84–5.



revival of antiquity and poetic self-analysis, but who was immune both to consistent moral thought and to the deeper theological influence of St. Augustine. Those who enriched the study of his classical enthusiasms no less than any others were prone to see in his passion for antiquity the essence both of his humanism and of his un-philosophical modernity, and although the details of his struggles with *gloria*, *fama*, and *amor* were brought into increasingly sharp focus, Petrarch's humanism remained yoked to his reputation as the poet of *dissidio*. In the second edition of his *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme* (1907), Pierre de Nolhac staunchly defended Petrarch's claim to having been the 'first modern man' by contending that '[p]eu importe que les idées en lui ne soient pas originales, puisque ses aspirations le sont à un degré si rare; c'est un poète, non un philosophe, qui va agir sur le monde et l'aider à se transformer.'<sup>22</sup> From the beginning of his literary life, the beauty of the classics enchanted him and carried him on his voyage of poetic imagination, drawing him away from the disciplines which were the foundation of so much contemporary intellectual endeavour—jurisprudence, theology, and scholastic philosophy.<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, although de Nolhac recognised the importance of St. Augustine to Petrarch's intellectual development, and devoted more attention to uncovering the influence of works such as the *Confessiones* than any previous scholar, his view of Petrarch's humanism appears to have persuaded him that, as Voigt and Burckhardt had suggested, St. Augustine may have been an *alter ego*, or even a soul-mate, to Petrarch, but his writings offered an experiential touchstone and a performative model more than a source of theological learning comparable to the authority of classical philosophy. Although de Nolhac recognised that in St. Augustine's works, Petrarch found not only a complete union of classical culture and the truth of the Christian faith, but also a precedent for his enthusiasm for ancient literature,<sup>24</sup> he seems to have believed that this merely authorised Petrarch's passion for Cicero, Seneca, Virgil and others, and carried no further implication of affinity with the saint's moral theology. In de Nolhac's eyes, Petrarch saw St. Augustine—especially the St. Augustine of the *Confessiones*—as a uniquely kindred spirit, but not as an intellectual guide.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> De Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme*, 1:2.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 2:191–2.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 1:26–7: 'Il n'y a pas une originalité moindre en ses observations psychologiques. Il doit beaucoup sans doute à Sénèque et aux Pères; mais, de même qu'il peignait par des



Writing nineteen years later and with a broader historical focus in mind, Edward Tatham similarly saw Petrarch's modernity as lying in the sense of individualism and subjectivism which arose out of his humanism. For Tatham—drawing on Körting's earlier work—Petrarch's humanism was an end in itself and, as such, the essence of his philosophical disinterest:

[T]he movement which he led has been justly called 'Humanism', because it started from a sense of dignity and independence of man... and because it recognised classical literature as a stage on which man had been able to play his part in complete moral freedom... He strove to make antiquity, not the mere handmaid of knowledge, but its inspiration, as theology had been for scholasticism. Thus Humanism became to him almost a religious enthusiasm rather than a new code of precepts.<sup>26</sup>

Other biographers gently concurred with the divergence which ottocento scholars had detected between the persona of the humanistic poet and the practices of the philosopher. Writing in 1909, Maud Jerrold detected in his poetry a distinctly modern 'sense of freedom and emancipation' and a peculiar consciousness of his individuality derived in part from the ancient classics, but was unable to find traces of either consistency or profundity in his thought.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, for Jerrold, the character of Petrarch's humanism was so opposed to philosophical coherence that it was 'remarkable' that his philosophy should ever have attracted attention.<sup>28</sup> In his biographical study (1930)—perhaps the most thorough of the first half of the twentieth century—Luigi Tonelli likewise followed earlier Romantic approaches in contending that Petrarch's enthusiasm for the classics was united to his

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paroles justes les spectacles extérieurs qui frappaient ses yeux, il a cherché, en tenant la plume, à rendre un compte exact de sa personne moral... La lecture de tant d'autres lettres et traités, dans lesquels il s'étudie ou se livre sans cesse, n'a pas tout le charme qu'on pourrait attendre, surchargés qu'ils sont de citations et de réminiscences étrangères. Il est un ouvrage pourtant qui se lit d'un bout à l'autre, où la sincérité est incontestable et l'accent plus ému qu'ailleurs. Ce sont les dialogues avec S. Augustin, que le poète intitulait son « Secret » et qui sont les « Confessions » véritables de son cœur et de son génie. Les demandes du saint fouillent impitoyablement dans la conscience du fidèle, et celui-ci répond, se défend ou s'accuse, avec une simplicité touchante, avouant à la fois celle des passions dont on est le plus fier, l'amour de la gloire, et ceux des défauts qui coûtent le plus à reconnaître, les petites vanités. Depuis le livre de S. Augustin, qui l'a inspiré, aucune œuvre n'a relevé à ce degré l'intimité d'une âme, et cette âme se trouve, une des plus délicates et des plus complexes qui aient jamais existé.'

<sup>26</sup> E. H. R. Tatham, *Francesco Petrarca: The First Modern Man of Letters*, 2 vols. (London, 1926), 2:27.

<sup>27</sup> M. F. Jerrold, *Francesco Petrarca: Poet and Humanist* (London and New York, 1909), 324–5.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

poetic outlook. Although Petrarch had been studied with care and attention in the early part of the century, Tonelli approvingly noted that he attached importance not to systematic thought, but to fragmentary tendencies, appropriate to poets and artists.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, such a view accorded little importance to the influence of St. Augustine. Since Petrarch's humanism was, by definition, connected with his poetic *dis-sidio* and opposed to philosophical consistency, it was inconceivable that St. Augustine's theology could have had any significant or lasting impact on Petrarch's thought: what limited role Augustine did play in shaping Petrarch's outlook could be circumscribed once again by the latter's experiential identification with the saint's conversion experience and by the performative model offered by the *Confessiones*. Indeed, that Petrarch's humanism was, as Tatham argued, 'almost a religious enthusiasm' effectively precluded anything more than the most superficial Christian sensibilities being attributed to him, and some scholars of this period were prepared to deny Petrarch even so slight an intellectual attachment to Christian belief. In his 1926 biography, for example, Hanns Eppelsheimer went so far as to emphasise the 'enlightened' and 'pagan' character of Petrarch's humanism, and sought to portray him almost as the reincarnation of a classical sage of the pre-Christian era.<sup>30</sup> For Eppelsheimer, the contribution of Augustine's theology to Petrarch's thought was virtually non-existent, and the empathetic bond which tied Petrarch to the author of the *Confessiones* served as a merely emotional annexe to his more powerful and important classical interests.

From the late 1920s onwards, Petrarch's position as the founding father of humanism began to be questioned more intensively, and a more qualified view of his approach to St. Augustine started to take shape. As his works began to be subjected to closer philological scrutiny, Petrarch gradually came to be viewed as a participant in, rather than the instigator of, a broad and complex cultural change, and the nature of his enthusiasm for the Latin classics increasingly came to be seen as more dynamic than previously supposed, and as more closely linked to his interest in St. Augustine than earlier scholars had been prepared to accept.

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<sup>29</sup> L. Tonelli, *Petrarca* (Milan, 1930), 347: 'Anche come pensatore, il Petrarca è stato studiato con cura e attenzione: specie in questi ultimi tempi, che, con maggiore giustizia e più squisita storicità, si dà importanza, nel disegnare l'evoluzione del pensiero umano, alle stesse concezioni non sistematiche e alle semplici, frammentarie tendenze, proprie dei poeti ed artisti.'

<sup>30</sup> H. W. Eppelsheimer, *Petrarca* (Bonn, 1926).

On the one hand, scholars came to recognise that Petrarch's humanism was neither as exclusively 'classical' nor as relentlessly 'unphilosophical' as had previously been supposed: despite his contempt for dialecticians, Petrarch's humanism did not preclude engagement with moral questions and was not bereft of a genuine Christian consciousness. Although Petrarch devoted much energy to the study and imitation of classical texts, he also drew much inspiration from Christian writers in addressing ethical problems, and from the first quarter of the twentieth century onwards, evidence was adduced to suggest that his reading of Cicero, Seneca, and Virgil—for example—was significantly influenced by his appreciation of St. Augustine's own relationship with the classics. Particularly as a result of the early, pioneering work of Pietro Paolo Gerosa, Augustine came to be viewed as the 'third wheel' in the machine that was Petrarch's humanism, and works such as the *De vera religione*, the *Soliloquies*, and the *Enarrationes in psalmos* were gradually recognised as having played a prominent part in shaping his thought.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, Petrarch's intellectual development began to be viewed as rather more uneven than had previously been thought. Instead of having simply emerged as a fully-fledged humanist with a consistent interest in classical literature and a stable appreciation of St. Augustine as the archetype of the Christian soul in conflict with itself, Petrarch's thought gradually came to be seen as having been subject to considerable change, and he himself was viewed as having been tortured by recurring anxieties of influence. Having recognised that texts such as the *Secretum* and the allegorical account of the ascent of Mt. Ventoux betray the importance which Petrarch attached to St. Augustine in his intellectual and moral development, scholars acknowledged that his reading of the bishop of Hippo's writings constituted an invaluable compass for the

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<sup>31</sup> See, for example, C. Calcaterra, 'Sant' Agostino nelle opera di Dante e del Petrarca,' *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scholastica* 23 supp. (1931): 422–99; P. P. Gerosa, *Umanesimo cristiano del Petrarca. Influenza agostiniana attinenze medievali* (Turin, 1966) [an earlier, shorter edition of this work was published in Turin, 1927]; F. Tateo, *Dialogo interiore e polemica ideologica nel 'Secretum' del Petrarca* (Florence, 1965); K. Heitmann, 'Augustinus Lehre in Petrarca's *Secretum*,' *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 22 (1960): 34–53; idem, 'L'insegnamento agostiniano nel *Secretum* del Petrarca,' *Studi petrarcheschi* 7 (1961): 187–93; F. Rico, 'Petrarca y el *De vera religione*,' *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica* 17 (1974): 313–64; P. Courcelle, 'Pétrarque entre Saint Augustin et les Augustins du xiv<sup>e</sup> siècle,' *Studi petrarcheschi* 7 (1961): 5–17; idem, 'Pétrarque lecteur des *Confessions*,' *Rivista de cultura classica e medioevale* 1 (1959): 26–43; G. Billanovich, 'Nella biblioteca del Petrarca: Il Petrarca, il Boccaccio, e le *Enarrationes in psalmos* di S. Agostino,' *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 3 (1960): 1–58; E. Razzoli, *Agostinismo e religiosità del Petrarca* (Milan, 1937).

reconstruction of the shifting trajectory of Petrarch's thought. Although some scholars—most notably Umberto Bosco—continued to see Petrarch's *dissidio* as a source of a persistent inconstancy so intense that he effectively became a man 'senza storia',<sup>32</sup> the belief that Petrarch was at times more closely influenced by St. Augustine's moral treatises than by works of classical literature, and vice versa, formed an important element in the attempts which others made to construct a chronology for his intellectual development.<sup>33</sup>

If changing views of Petrarch's humanism allowed greater credence to be given to St. Augustine's having exerted a more substantial influence over his works, however, the impulse towards the reconstruction of his intellectual evolution was nevertheless based on the assumption that Petrarch was ultimately inconsistent in his approach to philosophical questions. If Petrarch's humanism was not completely 'unphilosophical', it was thought that it remained at some distance from the coherence and rigour of systematic philosophy. However deep his interest in moral issues may have been, he was seen as having equivocated between divergent philosophical traditions, and never having attempted to reconcile the different points of view which he encountered in various periods of his life. Attention in this regard has tended to focus primarily on the *Familiars* and the *Secretum*, the latter of which has been viewed both as the key to Petrarch's moral thought and as the encapsulation of a deep philosophical inconsistency. Carlo Calcaterra, for example, attempted to suggest that the *Secretum* was a patchwork quilt of different sentiments which reflects a transition from a youthful fascination for classical literature to a later

<sup>32</sup> U. Bosco, *Petrarca*, 2nd ed. (Bari, 1961), 7, 9.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, C. Calcaterra, 'La concezione storica del Petrarca,' *Annali della Cattedra Petrarcesca* 9 (1939–40): 1–26; idem, *Nella selva del Petrarca* (Bologna, 1942); V. Rossi, 'Sulla formazione delle raccolte epistolari petrarchesche,' *Annali della Cattedra Petrarcesca* 3 (1932), 62–73; G. Martellotti, 'Linee di sviluppo dell'umanesimo petrarchesco,' *Studi petrarcheschi* 2 (1949): 51–82; G. Billanovich, *Petrarca Letterato*, vol. 1, *Lo Scrittore del Petrarca* (Rome, 1947); P. G. Ricci, 'Per il Petrarca storico e umanista,' *Rinascimento* 6 (1955): 166–7; E. H. Wilkins, *Petrarch's Correspondence* (Padua, 1960); idem, *The Making of the Canzoniere and Other Petrarchan Studies* (Rome, 1951); idem, *Studies in the Life and Works of Petrarch* (Cambridge MA, 1955); H. Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum: Its Making and Its Meaning* (Princeton, 1985); idem, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni. Studies in Humanistic and Political Literature* (Chicago and London, 1968); idem, 'Petrarch's Secretum: Was It Revised—and Why? The Draft of 1342–43 and the Later Changes,' *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 25 (1963): 489–530, reprinted in a revised form in Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, 51–101; F. Rico, *Vida u obra de Petrarca*, vol. 1, *Lectura del "Secretum"* (Padua, 1974).

Christian morality occasioned by a period of religious crisis.<sup>34</sup> Believing the transition to have occurred in the reverse order, Hans Baron—along with Francisco Rico—saw Petrarch as torn between an attachment to a broadly Augustinian moral theology and a Stoicism recovered primarily from the works of Cicero and Seneca.<sup>35</sup> Relying heavily on the imputation of conceptual adherence from quotation or citation, the perceived tension between a fideistic Augustinianism and a Stoicism founded on reason was similarly detected by Klaus Heitmann and appeared prominently in William Bouwsma's evaluation of Petrarch in his study of the 'two faces' of Renaissance humanism.<sup>36</sup>

The attribution of philosophical inconsistency to Petrarch during the mid-twentieth century has considerable resonance with interpretations of Renaissance humanism which place particular emphasis on its affinity with rhetoric. In his 1944 article 'Humanism and Scholasticism in the Renaissance', Paul Oskar Kristeller attempted to bring clarity to the often confused field of Renaissance studies by contending that rhetoric constituted one of the defining characteristics of humanism, and provided the impetus which drove the humanists to imitate classical models.<sup>37</sup> Having developed out of rhetorical and grammatical studies rather than philosophy or theology, humanism necessarily stood at some distance from the methods and preoccupations of the scholastics, but for Kristeller, this did not necessarily mean that the rhetorical character of humanism deprived it of an engagement with questions of moral philosophy.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, in Kristeller's view, humanists aspired to unite true eloquence with wisdom in such a manner that *eloquentia* became the medium for, and the inspiration of, the humanist pursuit of classical philology and philosophy.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Calcatetta, 'La concezione storica del Petrarca'; *Nella selva del Petrarca*, 1–18; 418ff.

<sup>35</sup> Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*; *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*; 'Petrarch's Secretum: Was It Revised—and Why?'; Rico, *Vida u obra de Petrarca*.

<sup>36</sup> W. J. Bouwsma, 'The Two Faces of Renaissance Humanism: Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance Thought,' in *Itinerarium Italicum: The Profile of the Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of its European Transformations. Dedicated to Paul Oskar Kristeller on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*, ed. H. A. Oberman and T. A. Brady Jr. (Leiden, 1975), 3–6; K. Heitmann, *Fortuna und Virtus: Eine Studie zu Petrarca's Lebensweisheit* (Cologne and Graz, 1957).

<sup>37</sup> P. O. Kristeller, 'Humanism and Scholasticism in the Renaissance,' *Byzantion* 17 (1944–45): 346–74, reprinted in P. O. Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Rome, 1956), 553–83 and Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 92–119. All subsequent page references to this article will refer to *Renaissance Thought*.

<sup>38</sup> Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 98–9.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 102ff. For treatments of Kristeller's point, see, for example, H. H. Gray, 'Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24/4 (Oct.–Dec.

While the search for the union of wisdom and style underpinned the humanist critique of scholasticism, Kristeller contended that it also inclined humanists to marry their rhetorical interest in the classics to a profound attachment to Christian doctrine, and forcefully rejected the earlier assertion 'that the humanist movement was essentially pagan or anti-Christian'.<sup>40</sup> Although he similarly spurned the view that humanism was essentially religious endeavour, Kristeller nevertheless believed that humanism was in some sense ineradicably marked by Christianity and that 'there were many scholars and thinkers with a humanist training who had a genuine concern for religious and theological problems'.<sup>41</sup> The humanist return to the Latin classics should therefore not be seen as having being narrow in focus: for Kristeller, the 'classics' included 'the Christian classics, that is, the Bible and the Church Fathers'<sup>42</sup> for the reason that 'these sources, which after all were themselves the product of antiquity, were considered as the Christian classics which shared the prestige and authority of classical antiquity and to which the same methods of historical and philological scholarship could be applied'.<sup>43</sup>

Of the Church Fathers, Kristeller argued that Augustine exercised the most significant and widespread influence and that 'the great variety and complexity of Augustine's works' ensured his relevance for humanists with a wide range of interests.<sup>44</sup> But while Augustine's systematic theology and debt to Neo-Platonism guaranteed his appeal to later Renaissance figures such as Marsilio Ficino, it was his background as 'a rhetorician, a philosopher, and a heretic who underwent conversion' and as 'a moral teacher...an autobiographer...[and] a rhetorically trained writer who finds a justification for the study of the pagan poets' that, for Kristeller, secured his reception amongst earlier figures.<sup>45</sup>

From Kristeller's point of view, Petrarch was thus an archetypal humanist in many ways. Deeply attached to the culture of classical antiquity, Petrarch was, if not a professional rhetorician, a rhetorician first and foremost. His rhetoric was, however, characterised by a desire to unite the *vera eloquentia* with wisdom, and to this end, he was drawn not only to

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1963): 497–514; J. Monfasani, 'Humanism and Rhetoric,' in *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, ed. A. Rabil Jnr., 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988), 3:217–235.

<sup>40</sup> Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 74.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

the titans of ancient literature, but also to the Church Fathers, and to Augustine above all. Yet, for Kristeller, Petrarch viewed St. Augustine not as a complete source of theological learning *per se*, but as an example of how classical antiquity could be explored from within a Christian context, and as a figure whose experiences and autobiographical tendencies spoke to his own interests.<sup>46</sup> Kristeller accepted that Augustine 'was one of [Petrarch's] favourite authors who even exercised a decisive influence on his spiritual development,'<sup>47</sup> but was nevertheless reluctant to attribute to St. Augustine's works any coherent intellectual influence. Although he observed that Petrarch quoted St. Augustine with approval on numerous occasions and saw the saint as a mediator between classical and Christian culture, Kristeller seems to have seen Petrarch's attitude to St. Augustine's theology as having been shaped primarily by immediate rhetorical considerations rather than an over-arching interest in the recovery of the saint's moral thought. As the ascent of Mt. Ventoux and the *Secretum* seemed to suggest, Augustine's experiences spoke clearly to Petrarch, but the bishop of Hippo's moral theology was to be approached from the perspective of a rhetorician and appropriated in a piecemeal fashion according to circumstances. Indeed, for Kristeller, it was 'the Augustine of the *Confessions*, the man who eloquently expresses his feelings and experiences, not the dogmatic theologian, who impressed Petrarch and other later humanists, and helped them to reconcile their religious convictions with their literary tastes and personal opinions.'<sup>48</sup>

Drawing direct inspiration from Kristeller's work on humanism and rhetoric,<sup>49</sup> Jerrold Seigel sought to shed light on Petrarch's importance to the development of humanism by examining his understanding of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy, and, in doing so, served to make explicit Kristeller's rather subtle suggestion that the rhetorical nature of Petrarch's humanism led him to approach Augustine in a less than consistent manner. Following Kristeller's view of humanism closely, Seigel recognised that 'the ideal of eloquence occupied a central position in Petrarch's culture,'<sup>50</sup> but also contended that 'for Petrarch . . . the ideal of

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<sup>46</sup> In addition to *Renaissance Thought*, see P. O. Kristeller, 'Il Petrarca, l'umanesimo e la scholastica a Venezia,' in *La civiltà veneziana del Trecento* (Venice, 1956), 149–78.

<sup>47</sup> Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 84.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> J. E. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism. The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* (Princeton, 1968), ix.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 34.



wisdom was more exalted than the ideal of eloquence, and was likely in any union of the two to claim the higher place.<sup>51</sup> The identity of wisdom was, however, open to some question, and was, for Seigel, intimately related to the demands of eloquence. For Seigel, Petrarch was acutely aware of the need to adapt his message to the changing demands of his audience, and was disturbed by the suspicion that the literary practices appropriate to the pursuit of eloquence could lead him into self-contradiction.<sup>52</sup> As a consequence, Seigel argued that Petrarch was wont to cast philosophy in the dependent role, and equivocated between different philosophical positions as circumstances required. While Petrarch felt able on occasions to speak as a philosopher in defence of the Stoic ideal of virtue, he was at other times drawn to embrace the more flexible precepts of the Peripatetics in addressing 'ordinary men' as an orator.<sup>53</sup>

In this, Seigel suggested that Petrarch followed Cicero above all others, and it was in his devotion to Cicero that his significance for later humanists lay: indeed, for Seigel, Petrarch

showed his followers how to acquire learning in the sense that he rediscovered the Ciceronian model for the relations between rhetoric and philosophy, and thus made it possible for rhetoric to become once again the doorway to general culture, and especially to learning in moral philosophy, that it had been in Cicero's time.<sup>54</sup>

Although Seigel was careful to note that Petrarch followed the Ciceronian model rather than the letter of Cicero's writings, he nevertheless saw Petrarch as so much the Ciceronian rhetorician that other influences were of little import. As a consequence, although Seigel was prepared to follow Kristeller in seeing St. Augustine as an experiential model, he accorded the bishop of Hippo only a very limited role in Petrarch's intellectual development, and contended that the restricted role the saint did play was shaped by Petrarch's concerns over the demands of rhetoric. Following Mazzeo's rather idiosyncratic reading of the *De doctrina christiana*, Seigel contended that Augustine became a model 'of life on a higher plane than the one the orator occupied',<sup>55</sup> an archetype of the inner virtue achieved after years spent as a rhetorician, and the acme of the *veritas in silentio*

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 31–2.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 45; q.v. J. A. Mazzeo, 'St. Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 23/2 (April–June 1962): 175–96.



beyond eloquence. Augustine was thus cited infrequently, and according to immediate objectives, but remaining always subordinate both to the example provided by classical thought, and to the Ciceronian model of rhetoric. The notion that Augustine exerted any substantive influence on Petrarch's thought was, for Seigel, reducible to the emphasis on death in their works, and even in this one respect, Cicero was identified as the ultimate source.<sup>56</sup>

Charles Trinkaus' works—most notably *In Our Image and Likeness* (1970) and *The Poet as Philosopher* (1979)—combine both the more positive evaluation of Petrarch's understanding of St. Augustine and the view of humanist rhetoric developed by Kristeller and Seigel. Particularly in his study of humanity and divinity in Renaissance thought, Trinkaus acknowledged that the humanists were deeply interested in questions of moral philosophy, but like Kristeller and Seigel, saw the specifically *rhetorical* character of humanism as the source of an inherent predisposition towards philosophical equivocation.<sup>57</sup> For Trinkaus, as for Seigel, the humanists, drawn by their rhetorical interests to emulate the ancient classics, found themselves in sympathy with Cicero's probabilistic belief that the orator should tailor both the style and the content of his moral exhortations to the immediate demands of his audience, irrespective of the overall consistency or inconsistency of his arguments, and making exception only for matters of faith.<sup>58</sup>

For Trinkaus, there could be little doubt that St. Augustine exercised a profound and lasting influence on the development of Italian humanism. The importance which Trinkaus attributed to Augustine's works was, however, circumscribed by his 'rhetorical' understanding of humanism. Evoking Kristeller's earlier views, Trinkaus contended that St. Augustine offered the humanists

a Christianity that was highly antique in form and in content, but standing in variance and contrast with pagan antiquity. It permitted them to open up and explore the writings of the ancients without fear of the demonic influence of paganism or of the suspicions and criticisms of their contemporaries. Ancient literature and philosophy, following Augustine's example,

<sup>56</sup> Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 46.

<sup>57</sup> C. Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols. (London, 1970), 1:xiii–xxvii; idem, *The Poet as Philosopher. Petrarch and the Formation of Renaissance Consciousness* (New Haven and London, 1979), *passim*.

<sup>58</sup> Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 18–26.

could be discussed calmly and rationally, but seriously and intently in a Christian context.<sup>59</sup>

In other words, Augustine not only authorised the study of the ancient classics, but also provided the humanists with a Christian 'superstructure' within which to accommodate their rhetorical probabilism. Moreover, Trinkaus suggests that St. Augustine offered the humanists an example of personal experience with which they could identify: his quest to reconcile ancient culture with his Christianity, and his attempt to place the self at the centre of ethical enquiry underpinned his attraction.<sup>60</sup> Beyond the mere fact of his Christianity and of his experiences, however, the appeal of Augustine's theological arguments was not only variable, but also limited, and was itself also subject to the demands of rhetoric.

In Trinkaus' eyes, Petrarch's relationship with St. Augustine set the tone for the humanist approach to the saint's writings. Like many other scholars before him, Trinkaus took it as axiomatic not only that Petrarch never wavered 'in thinking himself the most orthodox of Christians',<sup>61</sup> but also that St. Augustine was central to Petrarch's Christian thought. Drawing significantly on the work of Klaus Heitmann, however, Trinkaus argued that Petrarch's use of the saint's thought was ultimately inconsistent and that attitude towards St. Augustine was dominated by his 'rhetorical' humanism. While Petrarch cast a fictionalised representation of St. Augustine in the role of Franciscus' interlocutor, guide, and *alter ego* in the *Secretum*, Trinkaus suggested that the figure of Augustinus is made to express views which were often at variance with the saint's theology, and on occasions even voices opinions which the saint flatly rejected. For Trinkaus, Augustinus' view that 'by meditating on death and human misery one can produce the capacity to rise above the narrowness of our mortality' was, for example, the exact opposite of St. Augustine's argument in the *De civitate Dei*, and was instead reflective of the Stoicism to which Franciscus alludes.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Augustinus' apparent emphasis on the will was, Trinkaus suggested, 'a most un-Augustinian position', and Petrarch's references to the *Confessiones* were of questionable accuracy.<sup>63</sup>

On the one hand, Trinkaus contended that this equivocal attitude towards St. Augustine's thought was a reflection of the rhetorical character

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 18–19.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 9.

of Petrarch's humanism, and of the need to adapt argument to immediate objectives. 'It matters little,' Trinkaus argued,

whether he oscillated between Stoicism and Christianity, attributed positions to *Augustinus* that might well have horrified the Saint, never resolved the contradictions of his ideas, although frequently confusing them. He took where he found the material that seemed to apply to the moral and religious problems of man as he observed and experienced them.<sup>64</sup>

Seeing that '[i]n the final analysis he was a poet', Petrarch was able to 'be full of inconsistent statements because logical consistency has no value for him', and was capable of mixing elements of St. Augustine's thought with contradictory viewpoints drawn from classical philosophy because his primary objective was the rhetorical goal of moving men to virtue with arguments tailored to their own experiences.<sup>65</sup> This was a rhetorical position recovered from the ancient classics, especially Cicero, while the appropriation of this key precept of classical rhetoric was authorised by St. Augustine himself.

On the other hand, Trinkaus understood Petrarch's intellectually inconsistent approach to St. Augustine's theology in terms of the attraction of the bishop of Hippo's experiences. It was not so much the details of Augustine's theology which mattered to Petrarch, Trinkaus suggested, as the saint's personal quest for Christian peace and virtue in a world of uncertainty. In Trinkaus' words, Petrarch

did not so much forget as disregard the niceties of doctrine which to him were less important than the dynamic life situations of individual men struggling for salvation in a world where human existence itself dictated the variety of doctrinal positions, philosophic and religious. More important to him than the strict letter of Augustinian orthodoxy was the paradigmatic quality of the Saint's own experience of wandering, ambivalence, psychic division and ultimate resolution of his conflict and salvation...<sup>66</sup>

Thus, while Trinkaus followed the insights of earlier philologists in according St. Augustine a prominent role in the formation of Petrarch's thought, his development of the understanding of humanism advanced by Kristeller and Seigel persuaded him not only that Petrarch's rhetoric led him into philosophical inconsistency, but also that Petrarch viewed St. Augustine primarily as an authority for the study of classical literature and as

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 14.

a sympathetic individual. Similarly, in drawing both on Kristeller's view of humanism and on the work of scholars such as Heitmann, Trinkaus sustained the distinction between a broadly fideistic 'Augustinianism' and the Stoicism and Peripateticism known to Petrarch principally through the works of Cicero and Seneca.

In recent years, scholarly attitudes towards Petrarch's humanism have undergone considerable change, and both Petrarch's place in the history of humanism, and Augustine's role in shaping his humanistic practices have been the subject of much reappraisal. Despite the remarkable insights which these revisionist trends have provided, however, it is nevertheless striking that while St. Augustine's function as a legitimating authority and as an experiential model has been brought into sharper focus, and while the stress laid on Petrarch's supposed inconsistencies by Trinkaus and Seigel has diminished in force, the contribution of the saint's theology to Petrarch's moral thought continues to be viewed every bit as lightly as in previous decades.

Revisionist approaches to the development of humanism have tended to devalue Petrarch's importance and underscore the Christian character of his writing, but have at the same time simply dressed familiar interpretations of Petrarch's understanding of St. Augustine in new clothes. Ronald Witt's *In the Footsteps of the Ancients* constitutes perhaps the most important and perceptive reinterpretation of Petrarch's contribution to the development of Italian humanism. In concentrating on the imitation of Latin style in poetry and prose as the defining characteristic of Italian humanism, Witt not only came to re-evaluate the early humanists' debt to the French tradition of the *ars dictaminis*, but also suggested that humanism 'did not invade all literary genres simultaneously, but rather successively coopted one genre after another', beginning with poetry, the humanistic origins of which were to be found in grammar rather than in rhetoric.<sup>67</sup> Contending that the first stirrings of humanism were to be found in poetic expressions of a grammatical revival, Witt argued that Lovato dei Lovati should be seen as the author of the earliest surviving humanistic writings,<sup>68</sup> and further suggested that the imitation of the Latin classics was brought to bear on prose in the works of Albertino Mussato.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> R. G. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients. The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden, 2003), 6; see also R. G. Witt, 'The Origins of Humanism as a Stylistic Ideal,' in *Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Rabil, 1:29–70.

<sup>68</sup> Witt, *Footsteps*, 17, 81–116.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, 117–174.

Rather than being the 'father of humanism', Petrarch was, Witt argued, a third-generation humanist, whose importance lay not in his foundation of a new cultural mode, but in his re-orientation of a pre-existent trend. For Witt, Petrarch's precise contribution to the evolution of humanism could be attributed not to his desire to imitate the style of the ancient classics *per se*, but to his diversion of the 'secular-civic orientation' to a different direction.<sup>70</sup> 'Despite certain connections with his Italian predecessors,' Witt argued,

Petrarch, growing to manhood in southern France at the papal court, developed humanism in a different milieu and endowed it with a Christian consciousness destined to play a role in its evolution ever afterward... Petrarchan humanism balanced a passionate classicism with a traditional Christian devotion...<sup>71</sup>

Although 'Petrarch's religious bent must bear some of the responsibility for the pace at which humanism gained Italian recruits', Witt believed that it was this (often awkward) union of the classical and the Christian which determined Petrarch's influence on later figures, most particularly Coluccio Salutati.<sup>72</sup>

In combining a love of the classics with a devout Christianity, Witt argued that Petrarch's inspiration was St. Augustine. On the one hand, 'the touchstone for Petrarch's belief that pagan literature was relevant to Christian faith was Augustine's avowal in the *Confessiones* that his reading of Cicero's *Hortensius* had given him the initial impetus to reform his life.'<sup>73</sup> It was, in other words, Augustine's authority which, in Witt's interpretation, allowed Petrarch to approach the ancient classics from within a Christian context. On the other hand, Witt suggested that Petrarch also derived inspiration from his experiential identification with St. Augustine. For Witt, Augustine's conversion experience, described in the *Confessiones*, prompted Petrarch 'to scrutinize and re-evaluate the character of his life, by setting the conflict between secular and spiritual values in a Christian context'.<sup>74</sup> The influence of St. Augustine's theology on Petrarch's thought was, however, a different matter altogether. As a result of his concentration on humanism as an enterprise defined by the imitation of classical style, Witt suggests that the impact of Christian authors such as

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 497.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 290.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 251.

St. Augustine on Petrarch's ethical considerations was ambivalent, and one could be forgiven for detecting similarities with the arguments of Seigel and Trinkaus. For Witt, Petrarch's desire to imitate the ancient authors 'with the goal of moral reform while at the same time attempting to set moral standards by the dictates of Christian piety' led him into intellectual equivocation, and 'endowed the humanistic movement with a mission fraught with contradiction and ambivalence.'<sup>75</sup> Although his understanding of humanism is somewhat different to that of previous generations of scholars, and his interpretation of Petrarch's contribution to the humanistic movement radically new, Witt's reading of Petrarch's relationship to St. Augustine is therefore very much the same as that of Kristeller, and his assertion of some intellectual uncertainty has resonance with the work of Trinkaus and Seigel.

In a similar fashion, the recent upsurge of interest in the reception of St. Augustine's works during the Renaissance has been matched by a more intensive analysis of the Augustinian character of Petrarch's writings, but these, too, tread well-trodden paths with the aid of new and more detailed maps.<sup>76</sup> While the analysis of St. Augustine's influence on Petrarch's humanistic practices have deepened our understanding of the Christian character of the latter's attitude towards reading and writing, however, they have nevertheless remained focussed on the saint's importance as an experiential model and legitimating authority, and, on the basis of a similar preoccupation with the imitation of the Latin classics, rework an all-too familiar picture of St. Augustine's impact. For Carol Quillen, for example, Augustine constituted a vital point of reference for Petrarch's understanding of the manner in which classical texts were to be read and imitated, but his importance resided more in the authority with which his name was invested and in his example than in the details of his thought. Indeed, as Quillen has put it,

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 259; note also J. Küpper, 'Philology and Theology in Petrarch,' *MLN* 122/1 (Jan. 2007): 133–47; idem, *Petrarca: das Schweigen der Veritas und die Worte des Dichters* (Berlin, 2002).

<sup>76</sup> On Augustine in the Renaissance, see, for example: M. M. Gorman, *The Manuscript Traditions of the Works of St. Augustine* (Florence, 2001); M. J. Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge, 2005). Prominent, recent studies of Petrarch and St. Augustine include C. E. Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance: Petrarch, Augustine and the Language of Humanism* (Ann Arbor, 1995); R. Cardini and D. Coppini, eds., *Petrarca e Agostino* (Rome, 2004); E. Luciani, *Les Confessions de Saint Augustin dans les lettres de Pétrarque* (Paris, 1982). See also V. Kahn, 'The Figure of the Reader in Petrarch's *Secretum*,' *PMLA* 100/2 (March 1985): 154–66.

Petrarch appropriated, without sharing Augustine's outlook or priorities, characteristics of Augustine's writing, reading practices, and strategies of argument . . . Petrarch could in his own writing echo without accepting both Augustine's precise word definitions and his method of exegesis. Similarly, Petrarch used Augustine's example as a justification for reading pagan authors even though Augustine himself never made this case . . .<sup>77</sup>

As a result, in Quillen's eyes, Petrarch's importance to the humanist movement lay (at least in part) in the fact that he 'bequeathed to his like-minded successors an Augustine whose example and whose words could authorize humanist textual practices, an Augustine who could find redemption in the ageless works of Seneca, Cicero and Virgil.'<sup>78</sup> In this interpretation, it is not difficult to see manifested a more impressively detailed, and more thorough rendering of an established image of Petrarch's relationship with St. Augustine: although the terms of Quillen's analysis are somewhat different to those of Witt, Trinkaus, Kristeller, and others, her conclusions are broadly similar. Augustine remains a legitimizing authority for the study of the ancient classics, and a figure with whose experiences it was possible to identify, and Petrarch himself continues to appear as a somewhat eclectic individual, whose preoccupation with the revival of the ancient classics took priority over any coherent or consistent retrieval of St. Augustine's theology.

Although conceptions of Petrarch's humanism have changed considerably in the past 150 years, and the influence of St. Augustine on his intellectual development and humanistic practices has been treated more seriously since the early twentieth century, it is nevertheless difficult to avoid observing that Petrarch's approach to St. Augustine's theology continues to be regarded as lacking in consistency, and characterised as unsystematic or aphoristic. While the Romanticism which informed much nineteenth-century scholarship has been shed, the importance attached to Petrarch's humanistic interests seems to sustain an unwillingness to consider the possibility that he drew on St. Augustine's theology for inspiration in addressing moral questions in anything other than an equivocal and inconsistent manner. As we have seen, Petrarch remains a figure preoccupied with the recovery and imitation of the Latin classics and with the subjective exploration of the self, but a personality removed from, or even immune to, the rigors of philosophy. While it is generally accepted that

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<sup>77</sup> Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 217.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.



his thought was broadly Christian in character, his Christianity is thought to have been neither systematic nor consistent, and his adaptation of the Latin classics to a Christian context is presented as either removed from philosophical concerns or lacking in philosophical coherence. Although St. Augustine is seen to have offered Petrarch both a source of authority for the imitation of classical literature, and an experiential model with which he could identify, the impact of saint's theology is believed by some to have been incidental in comparison to the overarching influence of ancient thought, and by others to have been only intermittently felt. In those studies which credit St. Augustine with having inspired aspects of Petrarch's thought, analysis tends to focus on contrasting a broadly fideistic 'Augustinianism' with the Stoicism and Peripeteticism which Petrarch knew primarily from the works of Cicero and Seneca.

Despite the tremendous insights which it has provided into his works, however, it would perhaps not be unjust to observe that the enduring scholarly preoccupation with Petrarch's humanism—whether defined as a desire to revive the spirit of antiquity, as a poetic enterprise drawing inspiration from ancient literature, as a longing to imitate the Latin classics, or as a principally rhetorical or grammatical endeavour—is, by its very nature, apt not only to underestimate the value which he placed on moral philosophy and philosophical consistency, but also to under-rate both the subtlety of his knowledge of St. Augustine's theology and the extent to which he was prepared to use the saint's thought as a lens through which to read classical philosophy. His frequent quotations from classical literature and allusions to apparently contradictory schools of philosophy, together with his pervasive interest in literary imitation, initially appear to offer some grounds for granting credence to the imputation of philosophical inconsistency and to the suggestion of ambivalence towards St. Augustine's thought, but at a methodological level, it does not seem unreasonable to treat such evidence with a degree of caution. As Martin McLaughlin and Thomas Greene have demonstrated, Petrarch's approach to imitation was far from slavish and his practice of emulation was constructed around his independence of mind.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, alluring though citations may appear, it is little appreciated that quotation need not imply a deeper conceptual adherence, and the possibility that

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<sup>79</sup> T. M. Greene, *The Light in Troy. Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven and London, 1982), 81–146; M. L. McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance. The Theory and Practice of Literary Imitation From Dante to Bembo* (Oxford, 1995), 22–49.



gnomic references to classical texts might mask an underlying consistency rooted in Christian theology has been significantly underexplored. Moreover, despite the greater attention that has been given to his relationship with the saint, it is perhaps too easy to assume that Petrarch knew St. Augustine as the author of a monolithic body of fideistic theology in tension with elements of classical philosophy, and too tempting to presuppose that Petrarch was incapable of employing the bishop of Hippo's early attempts to marry his rhetorical interests with his burgeoning Christian faith as a loom on which to weave a coherent programme of moral self-transformation using ancient threads. Consequently, it might be suggested that significant and revealing dimensions of Petrarch's attitude towards classical sources have been overlooked, and that aspects of Petrarch's importance to the development of later humanistic thought in Italy have been neglected.

As this study seeks to demonstrate, Petrarch's relationship with St. Augustine was far more profound and complex than has previously been supposed. Although Petrarch did indeed regard St. Augustine as a legitimizing authority and an *alter ego*, it is argued that it is mistaken to believe that Petrarch's interest in the saint's moral theology was obstructed either by a desire to revive the ancient classics *tout court* or by a willingness to entertain philosophical disinterest or inconsistency. Whereas St. Augustine's later works (such as the *De civitate Dei* and the anti-Pelagian tracts) did indeed emphasise the importance of grace and faith, this study points out that previous Petrarchan scholarship has ignored the fact that his earlier works (such as the *Soliloquies* and the *De vera religione*) attempted to adapt much ancient philosophy to the demands of the Christian faith, and illustrated the role of rational self-transformation in the pursuit of virtue. Petrarch was, it is argued, highly conscious of the multi-faceted nature of St. Augustine's theology. Petrarch had not only read Augustine's earlier works with care—a fact which is habitually overlooked—but was also aware that Augustine's first forays into Christian moral theology had drawn inspiration from classical literature and philosophy. Recognising the classical roots of St. Augustine's theology, and sensitive to the rationalistic elements of the saint's early works, Petrarch saw no tension between his literary interest in the ancient classics and his admiration for the theology of St. Augustine.

The implications which this has for the manner in which we should read Petrarch's apparent affection for classical thought are clear. On the one hand, Petrarch's deep knowledge of St. Augustine's early works suggests that passages which have previously been viewed as redolent of the Stoic doctrine of the will, or of classical rationalism, for example, may,

in fact, be understood more convincingly as an expression of a desire to emulate St. Augustine's early theology. On the other hand, Petrarch's awareness of Augustine's conceptual debt to the pagan classics provided him with a lens through which to read classical literature. In keeping with his understanding of imitation, and as he explicitly stated on more than one occasion, Petrarch was able to use quotations from Cicero or Seneca, for example, in support of moral arguments inspired by St. Augustine.

With this in mind, this study offers a thorough re-evaluation of Petrarch's relationship with St. Augustine. Its central contention is that, despite his frequent use of quotations drawn from classical authors ranging from Cicero and Seneca to Virgil and Horace, Petrarch's thought on moral questions was derived principally from the writings of St. Augustine. Examining key themes in Petrarch's works—Augustine and *imitatio*, virtue, *otium*, solitude, friendship, and eloquence (many of which have been overlooked by scholarship)—it attempts to bring to light the profound influence of St. Augustine's theology, and uncovers a number of hitherto unrecognised Augustinian sources for Petrarch's views. It is hoped that this thematic approach—which avoids the methodological dangers inherent to an analysis of Petrarch's use of individual works—reveals the extent of his knowledge of St. Augustine's writings, underscores the richness of Petrarch's intertextual practices, and brings to light the dexterity he employed in navigating the waters which connected classical and patristic streams of thought.

In offering a re-evaluation of Petrarch's conceptual debt to St. Augustine, this study endeavours also to raise a number of wider questions not only about Petrarch himself, but also about the development of Renaissance humanism more generally. On the one hand, in illustrating the extent of the debt which he owed to St. Augustine's theology, this study invites a re-analysis of Petrarch's intellectual development, and a critical re-evaluation of the notion that he experienced a 'crisis' in the mid-1340s. Moreover, in stressing the Augustinian roots of his thought, it suggests that the importance of events such as the rediscovery of Cicero's letters to Atticus should be reconsidered and, perhaps most critically, that the dating of certain works (particularly the *Secretum*) should be reconsidered. On the other hand, this study attempts to raise questions about the precise role which Petrarch played in the evolution of humanistic thought. Petrarch's use of Augustinian theology and exploitation of resonances between Christian and classical writings seems to pose a challenge to the view that he helped to usher in an intellectual outlook at variance with earlier traditions, and to our understanding of the relationship between

eloquence and philosophy in the development of Italian humanism. By the same token, the conclusions of this study hope to invite a more questioning analysis of the manner in which Petrarch's works were read—or perhaps *mis*-read—in later centuries.

This study is divided into six chapters, and while it cannot pretend to offer an absolutely complete survey of Petrarch's relationship with St. Augustine, it is hoped that the thematic approach adopted in each section will highlight both the subtlety and the profundity of Petrarch's intellectual debt to the bishop of Hippo.

Intended to serve a ground-clearing purpose, the first chapter extends recent pioneering work on literary imitation during the Renaissance to challenge prevailing assumptions about Petrarch's underlying approach to classical philosophy and Augustinian theology. This chapter will argue that the attempt to impute intellectual inconsistency and uncritical imitation to Petrarch on the basis of his frequent allusions to classical thought is incompatible both with Petrarch's view of literary imitation and with his understanding of St. Augustine's relationship with classical literature. Although Petrarch's frequent allusions to various schools of classical philosophy are striking, this chapter points out that quotation does not necessarily infer philosophical affinity any more than imitation demands reproduction.

On the one hand, Petrarch's highly nuanced understanding of the debt which St. Augustine owed to classical philosophy provided him with a precedent for the selective inclusion of classical imagery, quotations, and allusions into a Christian context: reading Cicero and Seneca through the lens of St. Augustine, it is suggested that he felt at liberty to quote from their works as if they had written with St. Augustine in mind.

On the other hand, Petrarch's understanding of imitation stressed the erection of new edifices from old and familiar materials. The contextual meaning which Petrarch wished to attach to a particular quotation could, in other words, often be quite different from the original. Petrarch was thus able to mine anything from Cicero's dialogues and Seneca's letters to Juvenal's *Satires* and Ovid's *Ars amatoria* for gnomic quotations and ancillary support while remaining true to the moral theology of St. Augustine.

If, as this chapter suggests, Petrarch was not an eclectic and inconsistent connoisseur of classical aphorisms, but was instead both able and willing to read ancient literature through an Augustinian lens, we are obliged to question whether those elements of Petrarch's thought which have previously been viewed as indicative of Stoic, Peripatetic, or Epicurean

tendencies are as 'classical' as they might first seem. The question of attribution—hitherto concealed by the assumption of inconsistency and uncritical reproduction—is of central importance to our understanding of Petrarch's relationship with St. Augustine.

The second chapter, 'Stoicism and "Augustinianism" in the *Secretum*', applies the 'question of attribution' to the *Secretum*, Petrarch's most complete moral treatise, and argues that the imputation of inconsistency and eclecticism to his treatment of virtue is based on the misidentification of 'Stoic' passages and reflects an inflexible understanding of Petrarch's appreciation of Augustinian theology. Instead, this chapter seeks to offer a revised reading of this key text and highlights the pervasive influence of St. Augustine's early theology.

Even if it is accepted that Petrarch was experiencing something of a 'crisis' while he was composing the *Secretum*, this chapter points out that that it is perhaps too easy not only to overstate any apparent contradictions between his sources of inspiration, but also to ignore his capacity to have produced a logically coherent text while drawing on a variety of different sources. This chapter argues that if Petrarch was indeed tormented by tensions between his admiration for classical literature and the theology of St. Augustine (as is often claimed), it is unnecessary to assume that this emerged out of an antagonism between two monolithic bodies of thought. Although Petrarch did recognise the Stoics—known primarily through the works of Cicero and Seneca—and St. Augustine as authors of distinct philosophical systems, he had a subtle understanding of their relationship and was aware of the possibility of reconciling these two apparently divergent strands of thought within a discourse of faith and reason proposed by St. Augustine himself. Those passages which have been identified as being redolent of Stoic thought have, in other words, been misattributed.

Distinguishing carefully between St. Augustine's later, more fideistic works and his earlier writings, this chapter argues that Petrarch's apparently Stoical emphasis on the will and on rationality in the first book of the *Secretum* may be read more convincingly as the product of his knowledge of Augustine's *Soliloquies* and *De vera religione*. As such, the passages dealing with rationality and the will may be seen as logical counterparts to Petrarch's discussion of the *meditatio mortis*. In contrast to previous interpretations of the *Secretum* which stress the inconsistency and eclecticism of the work, this chapter shows that rationality, will, and a recognition of mortality formed part of a coherent understanding of the path to virtue and happiness. At the same time, it suggests that for Petrarch, as for

St. Augustine, rational self-transformation worked in co-operation with God's grace, while prayer served to strengthen the resolve in an arduous and sometimes lonely quest.

As an examination of the nature and pursuit of both virtue and happiness, and as a text which enjoyed a wide readership in manuscript and in print, the *Secretum* has rightly been seen as occupying an important place in the development of Renaissance perceptions of the relationship between man and God. Indeed, some scholars engaged in the history of theology have attempted to relate it to later Reformation developments. Charles Trinkaus, for example, has argued that the *Secretum* prefigures Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone. Having uncovered the Augustinian nature of Petrarch's argument, however, this chapter suggests that the *Secretum* can meaningfully be viewed as a manifestation of the fourteenth-century 'Augustinian Renaissance' (key figures in which were well known to Petrarch), and consequently raises provocative questions about the trajectory of Renaissance and Reformation ontology, and about the manner in which Petrarch's most personal work was read by later generations.

The third chapter turns from Petrarch's abstract conception of virtue to examine the Augustinian dimensions of the practical life of virtue described in one of his most important, but most overlooked treatises: the *De otio religioso*. Far from advocating a form of monastic retreat using terms laden with the association of various schools of classical philosophy, this chapter argues that Petrarch described *otium* as a form of 'active leisure' in the Christian tradition, and framed the work around an extract from St. Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos*.

Rather than endeavouring to read the *De otio religioso* through the distorting lens of later humanistic debates, this chapter concentrates specifically on the exact identity of *otium*. As this chapter demonstrates, Petrarch's *otium* was neither a monastic *vita contemplativa* or a secular *vita activa*, but a form of active, mental leisure based on continuous effort and mental peace. The *otiosus*—the man in a state of virtuous leisure—strove to understand his own nature through rational self-analysis and freed himself from the temptations of the corporeal world. Like St. Augustine's *vacatio*, Petrarch's *otium* entailed repose from the *accidia* and desire which produced sorrow, and a *mens quieta* which was able to 'see' God clearly.

If the *De otio religioso* can be seen to describe a practical life of virtue derived primarily from St. Augustine's early theology, however, this chapter also highlights Petrarch's virtuosity in expressing a distinctive moral perspective while exploring points of conceptual similarity in other

intellectual traditions, exploiting the richness of *otium*'s lexical heritage, and mining classical literature for apposite gnomic quotations. In turn, the Augustinian roots of the *De otio religioso* raise provocative questions about the manner in which the text was read—or *misread*—by later humanists, such as Coluccio Salutati, whose concerns lay more obviously with the classical distinction between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*.

The fourth chapter extends the analysis of Petrarch's *Lebensweisheit* by turning to examine the idea of solitude, and suggests that the virtuosity which he displayed in dealing with *otium* was even more strongly evident in his treatment of *solitudo*. Carefully analysing the literary motifs which Petrarch appears to have drawn from the classical tradition, this chapter identifies subtle differences between the solitude described in the *De vita solitaria* and the rustic seclusion described by classical authors such as Cicero, Virgil, Horace, and Seneca. Although Petrarch's use of classical *topoi* is striking, a detailed examination of the text reveals that the *De vita solitaria* is neither Stoic nor Epicurean, but was framed around Augustine's idea of *vacatio*. This chapter argues that Petrarch seems to have seen solitude as a *solitudo animi*—a solitude of the mind—and as a freedom from *res aliena*, in the same way that *otium* was viewed as an active leisure from worldly temptations and earthly sorrow. For Petrarch, as for Augustine, solitude was attained not by escaping to the countryside and fleeing the town, but by pursuing rational self-knowledge through meditation, prayer, and study.

The chapter concludes by looking at the key role played by landscape imagery in Petrarch's treatment of *solitudo*, an aspect of his thought believed to be particularly indicative of classical influences, and a dominant feature of the *Canzoniere*. Despite his affection for classical tropes, it is argued that Petrarch used landscape imagery in imitation of classical sources as a means of illustrating his Augustinian concept of solitude. Just as the degradation of the town was a vivid visual cipher for the baseness of worldly desires, and just as the 'poetic fallacy' could highlight the persistence of temporal obsessions away from the city, so the serenity of the countryside was an illustration of the peace towards which Petrarch's Augustinian moral philosophy pointed.

In the fifth chapter, the idea of friendship is considered. In contrast to his many friendships, Petrarch's understanding of the concept of *amicitia* has been studied only very little, but is nevertheless an integral part of the manner in which he conceived of the virtuous life. Where it has been studied, Petrarch's *amicitia* is seen as having been constructed in direct imitation of Cicero and—to a lesser extent—Seneca. Using evidence from

the *Familiares*, the *Seniles*, the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, and the *De vita solitaria*, this chapter challenges this claim, and not only reveals the Christian connotation of Petrarch's *amicitia*, but also uncovers the underlying influence of St. Augustine's *De vera religione*.

In illustrating the Augustinian roots of Petrarch's conception of *amicitia*, this chapter raises a number of tantalising questions about the role of idealised friendship in the later Renaissance. A common feature of humanist correspondence, and a prominent trope in the literature of the period, the ideal friendship is increasingly coming to be recognised as a valuable insight into the interpenetration of literary culture and interpersonal relations in the Renaissance. Not only were Cicero's dialogues an important point of reference in the development of this trope, but Petrarch's own writings on friendship—particularly the *De remediis utriusque fortune*—enjoyed a wide readership from the late fourteenth century onwards. If Petrarch's concept of *amicitia* was an expression of willingness to make use of St. Augustine's theology, and to clothe his thought in classical garb, however, it is necessary to question if the development of the notion of the ideal friendship in the Renaissance had similarly Augustinian roots, and to query the extent to which later writers made conscious use of Petrarch's works.

Having examined the Augustinian nature of Petrarch's conception both of virtue and of the virtuous life, the sixth chapter turns to the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy in his thought. As has already been observed, this is at the heart of historical constructions of Petrarch's humanism, and the determining role commonly attributed to his understanding of eloquence underpins claims of philosophical indifference or inconsistency. Having evaluated the methodological foundations of some of the most important studies of the topic, this chapter reconstructs the development of Petrarch's thought on the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy, from the ninth book of the *Africa* and the Coronation Oration to the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, and pays particularly close attention to the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* and the *Invective contra medicum*. Despite claims that Petrarch's conception of the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy was based on a Ciceronian model, this chapter uncovers a significant number of previously overlooked points of divergence between the two. Unlike Cicero—and the Ciceronian tradition—Petrarch not only saw eloquence and moral philosophy as co-dependent, but also prioritised the moral condition of the orator over the mastery of the technicalities of rhetoric. Of course, certain superficial parallels can still be observed with



elements of the rhetorical theories developed by figures such as Cicero, Quintilian, and Boethius, and even with later medieval traditions, but this chapter shows that the distinguishing characteristics of Petrarch's understanding of eloquence were influenced most strongly by a reading of St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. Offering Petrarch a model for recommending both biblical study and the reading of classical texts, the *De doctrina christiana* also allowed him the opportunity to ape St. Augustine in presenting eloquence as an integral part of a moral theology in which truth and virtue co-existed.

As this chapter argues, this re-evaluation of Petrarch's understanding of eloquence and moral philosophy has implications for how we understand the very essence of his humanism. Rather than being merely a 'poet' who was willing to adopt any perspective and who was happy to forsake consistency for the sake of literary style, Petrarch's Augustinian view of rhetoric marks him out as being far more deeply 'Christian' in his literary outlook than previously supposed. Perhaps more significantly, this interpretation also has serious implications for how we understand Renaissance humanism more generally. In showing that Petrarch not only saw eloquence and philosophy as co-dependent, but also looked to St. Augustine—rather than Cicero—for inspiration, this chapter calls elements of the 'Kristeller thesis' into question, and invites a broader re-evaluation of the nature, sources, and development of early Italian humanism.



## CHAPTER ONE

### A QUESTION OF ATTRIBUTION

#### 1. *Petrarch and St. Augustine*

In a letter addressed to Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro, Petrarch described an ascent of Mont Ventoux which he made in the company of his brother, Gherardo, on 26 April 1336.<sup>1</sup> As he relates, the two began their journey up the rocky slopes with enthusiasm some time before dawn, and were only spurred on by the stark warnings of an aged shepherd.<sup>2</sup> As the day went on, however, tiredness set in, and the two brothers chose to travel by different paths. While Gherardo took a short-cut along the ridge of the mountain and reached the heights quickly, the easier paths which Petrarch had chosen seemed to veer downwards, and long after his brother had reached the top of the mountain, he was still wandering around in the valleys in search of a gentle route.<sup>3</sup> When he eventually arrived at the summit, Petrarch gazed in wonder at the vista before him. Beyond the clouds which stretched out beneath him, he saw the icy peaks of the Alps, and glimpsed the skies above Italy.<sup>4</sup> On the right, there rose the mountains around Lyons, and on the left, there could be seen the Rhône and, further away, the waters of the Mediterranean.<sup>5</sup> Moved by this reverie, he turned to a copy of Augustine's *Confessiones* and, opening the book at random, his eyes fell on a passage of breathtaking appropriateness: 'And men go abroad to wonder at the heights of the mountains, the lofty billows of

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<sup>1</sup> *Fam.* IV, 1. Text ed. E. Bianchi in Petrarch, *Prose*, ed. G. Martellotti, P. G. Ricci, E. Carrara, and E. Bianchi (Milan and Naples, 1955), 830–43. On this letter, see the excellent commentary by R. Lokaj, *Petrarch, Ascent of Mount Ventoux: The Familiaris IV, 1, New Commented Edition*, *Scriptores Latini* 23 (Rome, 2006). For brief introductory discussions, see Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 12–13; Mann, *Petrarch*, 89–90. On the date of the ascent, see Bilanovich, *Petrarca Letterato*, 195; Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, 18, n. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Fam.* IV, 1, 6–8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 9–10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

the sea, the long courses of rivers, the vast compass of the ocean, and the circular motions of the stars, and yet pass themselves by.<sup>6</sup>

Although there is good reason to doubt the veracity of some aspects of the letter,<sup>7</sup> *Fam.* IV, 1 was intended to function primarily as an allegory, at the heart of which stood Petrarch's struggle between *virtus* and *voluptas*. Allowing his thoughts to drift while resting in a valley, Petrarch drew a comparison between his experience of the physical landscape and the life of the spirit. 'The life which we call blessed,' he mused

is situated in a high place; and the route to it is, as they say, narrow. Many hills stand in the way, and it is necessary to walk by clearly marked stages from virtue to virtue; at the summit is the goal of all things and the end of the route, to which our journey is directed.<sup>8</sup>

The routes which he and Gherardo had taken to reach the blessed life were, however, different. While the path followed by his brother, a Carthusian *renditus*, was harder,<sup>9</sup> Gherardo had reached the summit of virtue more readily than Petrarch, who had sought an easier route. His path had been that of earthly pleasure, and his journey to virtue, once begun, had, he realised, been made harder by the burdens imposed by his earlier desire to seek happiness in the fleeting attractions of the temporal world. As he progressed towards the peak, Petrarch's mind was called back con-

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 26–8: 'Que dum mirarer singula et nunc terrenum aliquid saperem, nunc exemplo corporis animum ad altiora subveherem, visum est michi *Confessionum* Augustini librum, caritatis tue munus, inspicere; quem et conditoris et donatoris in memoriam servo habeoque semper in manibus: pugillare opusculum, perexigui voluminis sed infinite dulcedinis. Aperio, lecturus quicquid occurreret; quid enim nisi pium et devotum posset occurrere? Forte autem decimus illius operis liber oblatas est. Frater expectans per os meum ab Augustino aliquid audire, intentis auribus stabat. Deum testor ipsumque qui aderat, quod ubi primum defixi oculos, scriptum erat: "Et eunt homines admirari alta montium et ingentes fluctus maris et latissimos lapsus fluminum et oceani ambitum et giro siderum, et relinquunt se ipsos." Obstupui, fateor...' Quoting Augustine, *Conf.*, X, viii, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Rossi, 'Sulla formazione delle raccolte epistolari petrarchesche,' 68–73; G. Billanovich, 'Petrarca e il Ventoso,' *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica* 9 (1966): 389–401; idem, *Petrarca Letterato*, 88ff, 192ff; Wilkins, *The Making of the Canzoniere*, 312ff; Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, 17–20.

<sup>8</sup> *Fam.* IV, 1, 13: 'Equidem vita, quam beatam dicimus, celso loco sita est; arcta, ut aiunt, ad illam ducit via. Multi quoque colles intereminent et de virtute in virtutem preclaris gradibus ambulandum est; in summo finis est omnium et vie terminus ad quem peregrinatio nostra disponitur.' Quoting *Matt.* 7:14.

<sup>9</sup> On Gherardo, see H. Cochlin, *Le Frère de Pétrarque et le Livre du Repos des Religieux* (Paris, 1903); R. J. Lokaj, 'Petrarch vs. Gherardo: a Case of Sibling Rivalry Inside and Outside the Cloister' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2001). It is worth noting that Gherardo only entered the Carthusian monastery at Montrieux c. 1342, and this fact has led Rossi (amongst others) to doubt that the letter could have been composed in April 1336: Rossi, 'Sulla formazione delle raccolte epistolari petrarchesche,' 68–73.

tinually to his past, and he went over his earlier attachment to worldly pleasures time and time again, as Augustine had done, not because he necessarily retained any residual affection for them, but for the sake of bringing himself closer to God.<sup>10</sup> Looking to the *Confessiones* at the top of the mountain, the lesson of his spiritual journey became clear. The key to attaining the blessed life lay in attention to the self; and the pursuit of self-knowledge required that he turn entirely towards God in the recognition that only through such devotion could the blessed life be attained. Recalling the words of St. Paul which had had such a momentous effect on Augustine—‘Not in revelling and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissention and jealousy, but clothe yourselves in the Lord Jesus Christ, and give no thought to the desires of the flesh’<sup>11</sup>—and remembering St. Anthony’s reading of the Gospel—‘If you would be perfect, go and sell all that you have and give it to the poor, and come and follow me and you will have riches in heaven’<sup>12</sup>—the essence of this self-knowledge became obvious. In a flash, Petrarch came to see that the fleeting pleasures of the temporal world were as nothing compared to the true happiness which could be found with God in heaven, and that the recognition of this fact was the key to the virtue which would merit the blessed life.

Despite the Ciceronian flavour of its style, and the echoes of Livy and Pomponius Mela in the theme of ascent,<sup>13</sup> *Fam.* IV, 1 is, at root, a Christian conversion drama revolving around Petrarch’s struggle to overcome his worldly desires, his longing for redemption, and his ultimate spiritual

<sup>10</sup> *Fam.* IV, 1, 20: ‘Tempus forsan veniet, quando eodem quo gesta sunt ordine universa percurram, prefatus illud Augustini tui: “Recordari volo transactas feditates meas et carnales corruptiones anime mee, non quod eas amem, sed ut amem te, Deus meus.”’ Quoting Augustine, *Conf.* II, i, 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Fam.* IV, 1, 30: ‘recolens quod idem de se ipso suspicatus olim esset Augustinus, quando in lectione codicis Apostolici, ut ipse refert, primum sibi illud occurrit: “Non in comessationibus et ebrietatibus, non in cubilibus et impudiciis, non in contentione et emulatione; sed induite Dominum Iesum Christum, et carnis providentia ne feceritis in concupiscentiis vestris.”’ Quoting *Rom.* 13:13; cf. Augustine, *Conf.* VIII, xii, 29.

<sup>12</sup> *Fam.* IV, 1, 31: ‘Quod iam ante Antonio acciderat, quando audito Evangelio ubi scriptum est: “Si vis perfectus esse, vade et vende omnia tua quaecunque habes et da pauperibus, et veni et sequere me et habebis thesaurum in celis,” “veluti propter se hec esset scriptura recitata,” ut scriptor rerum eius Athanasius ait, “ad se dominicum traxit imperium.”’ Quoting *Matt.* 19:21, and referring to Evagrius’ translation of Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, II; *PL* 73, col. 127.

<sup>13</sup> Billanovich, ‘Petrarca e il Ventoso,’ 392–3.

transformation.<sup>14</sup> In this, the figure of St. Augustine looms large, and the extent to which he overshadows the drama of Petrarch's spiritual transformation is evident in at least three closely-related aspects of the letter. First, Augustine's writings provide the framework for Petrarch's religious thought, and his works constitute a constant point of reference. It was Augustine's words which sprang to his mind again and again as he meditated on his longing to rise from the life of earthly pleasure to the life of virtue, and it was to Augustine's *Confessiones* that he turned at the summit. Second, Petrarch identifies himself with St. Augustine, and there is a sense in which he is attempting to 're-live' the saint's conversion experience. As Giuseppe Billanovich has demonstrated, the conversion drama at the core of the letter is modelled on an Augustinian pattern, and there are conscious echoes of the *Confessiones* running throughout the text.<sup>15</sup> Third, Augustine seems to have offered a model for the literary performance of Petrarch's struggles. As Carolyn Chiapelli has argued, the confessional nature of the account itself appears to have been borrowed from St. Augustine, while the frequent use of classical allusions also evokes the saint's manner.<sup>16</sup>

In that the figure of St. Augustine dominates the central drama of the letter, *Fam.* IV, 1 is reflective not only of Petrarch's extensive knowledge of the bishop of Hippo's works, but also of the profound influence which the saint exerted on Petrarch's life. Petrarch had, indeed, been an avid reader of Augustine's works since his youth. In February 1325, he purchased a copy of the *De civitate Dei* in Avignon for twelve florins, and this—his earliest datable acquisition of a manuscript—marked the beginning of a life-long enthusiasm for the bishop of Hippo's writings.<sup>17</sup> In the course of the next two decades, he went on to acquire the *Confessiones* (a gift from Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro), the *Soliloquies*, the *De orando Dei*, and the *De vera religione*.<sup>18</sup> In addition, from numerous references scattered throughout his works, it is apparent that Petrarch also had a knowledge

<sup>14</sup> R. Durling, 'The Ascent of Mt. Ventoux and the Crisis of Allegory,' *Italian Quarterly* 18/69 (1974): 7–28.

<sup>15</sup> Billanovich, 'Petrarca e il Ventoso'.

<sup>16</sup> C. Chiapelli, 'The Motif of Confession in Petrarch's "Mt. Ventoux",' *MLN* 93/1 (1978): 131–36.

<sup>17</sup> MS Padua, Bibl. Univ. 1490; see de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme*, 2:195–6.

<sup>18</sup> See Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 117–37.

of at least the *De Trinitate*,<sup>19</sup> the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*,<sup>20</sup> the *De doctrina christiana*,<sup>21</sup> the *Retractiones*,<sup>22</sup> the *Sermones*,<sup>23</sup> the *Epistles*,<sup>24</sup> the *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali*,<sup>25</sup> the *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*,<sup>26</sup> the *Tractatus CXXIV in Iohannis Evangelium*,<sup>27</sup> and the *De gratia et libero arbitrio*,<sup>28</sup> and was also well-acquainted with Bartolomeo Carusio of Urbino's gigantic *Milleloquium S. Patris Augustini*,<sup>29</sup> and Floro di Lione's *Expositio epistolarum b. Pauli collecta ex libris S. Augustini*.<sup>30</sup>

Petrarch was, by his own admission, an almost insatiable reader,<sup>31</sup> but his devotion to St. Augustine's writings was nevertheless unusual. In a letter to Giovanni d'Andrea, probably written in the mid- to late 1340s, Petrarch openly admitted that Augustine was his favourite Catholic author,<sup>32</sup> and it is a telling indication of the unique esteem in which Petrarch held Augustine that the *Confessiones*, the *De civitate Dei*, the *Soliloquies*, and the *De orando Dei* were included as the only examples of Christian literature in his list of his favourite books, written at some point between 1333 and

<sup>19</sup> E.g. *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, III, 51, quoting Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIII, iv, 7. Text and English translation in *Invectives*, ed. and trans. D. Marsh (Cambridge MA and London, 2003), 222–363, here 266.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. *Fam.* V, 18, 6; VII, 2, 19; XVI, 4, 6; XVII, 1, 26, 42–3; XVII, 10, 11.

<sup>21</sup> E.g. *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 2; P I, vii; *Prose*, 368, quoting Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 85. Latin text for the *De vita solitaria*, ed. G. Martellotti, *Prose*, 286–593; English translation, *Life of Solitude*, trans. J. Zeitlin (Illinois, 1924). In what follows, references to the *De vita solitaria* will indicate the relevant portion of text according to Jacob Zeitlin's translation (Z), according to the division of the work by Martellotti in *Prose* (P), and according to the page number in the *Prose* edition (*Prose*). For comment on Zeitlin's translation, see O. Shepard, Review of *Petrarch's Life of Solitude* by Jacob Zeitlin, *Journal of English and German Philology* 24 (1925): 560–74.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. *Fam.* II, 9, 13; XVIII, 3, 7.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. *Fam.* V, 18, 6; XVII, 4, 11–12; XXI, 8, 4.

<sup>24</sup> E.g. *Fam.* IV, 16, 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Fam.* I, 2, 14.

<sup>26</sup> *Fam.* III, 8, 8.

<sup>27</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 5; P II, iv; *Prose*, 440, quoting Augustine, *Tractatus CXXIV in Iohannis Evangelium*, xvii, 11.

<sup>28</sup> MS Paris, Bibl. Nat. lat. 2103. On Petrarch's manuscript copy of the *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, see Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 78, 152, 184–6.

<sup>29</sup> *Fam.* VIII, 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Fam.* XVIII, 3, 8. Rossi and Bosco have identified the reference to a 'liber in epistolas Pauli' with Floro di Lione's collection, although there is some possibility that Petrarch may also have had in mind one or several of the *Epistula ad Romanos inchoata Expositio*, the *Expositio quarundam Propositionum ex Ep. Apostoli ad Romanos*, and the *Expositio epistolae ad Galatas*, from which Floro's work was taken.

<sup>31</sup> *Sen.* XVI, 1, 2: 'Demum cum legendo, cuius insatiabilem me natura fecit...'

<sup>32</sup> *Fam.* IV, 15, 3: '... licet de hac re inter amicum tuum clare memorie Lomberiensem episcopum Iacobum et me crebro disceptatum esse meminerim, illo per vestigia tua semper uno ore Ieronimum, me vero Augustinum inter scriptores catholicos preferente.'

1343.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, as he confessed to Giovanni Boccaccio towards the end of his life, he believed that there was no-one who could equal Augustine,<sup>34</sup> and it is clear that 'noster Augustinus'<sup>35</sup> commanded his admiration in almost all regards. The eloquence of his writing, the holiness of his life, the energy with which he wrote, the sheer volume of his work, and the insight and inspiration of his thought left Petrarch awestruck, and, as he revealed in a letter thanking Boccaccio for sending him a copy of the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* in 1355, he spent days unbroken by meals and nights uninterrupted by sleep studying the saint's exegeses.<sup>36</sup> An African by birth, but a Roman in his eloquence, Augustine possessed, Petrarch believed, a divine genius, and it was with no hesitation that he recommended the saint's writings to the long-dead Marcus Varro.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The three lists, entitled 'libri mei peculiaries', are inscribed in MS Paris, Bibl. Nat. lat. 2201. The third list consists entirely of works by St. Augustine. On the lists, see Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 117–37.

<sup>34</sup> *Sen.* XVII, 2: 'Equidem Augustinum equari a nemine posse reor...'

<sup>35</sup> *Fam.* I, 2, 13: 'Quantos olim emulos Augustinus noster, quantos Ieronimus, quantos habuit Gregorius, donec spectata virtus et literarum divina et admirabilis ubertas invidiam vicere!'; *Fam.* XVIII, 5, 8: 'Videbis, quod de Biblide habetur in fabulis, Augustinum nostrum in fontem devotissimarum lacrimarum esse conversum, quem precare, oro te, ut ipse comunem Dominum pro me roget.' As with so many of Petrarch's letters, the date of *Fam.* I, 2 is somewhat uncertain. While Tatham was inclined to ascribe it to 1323 or later, Sabadini and Lo Parco favoured 1325, and Fracassetti advocated 1326 or earlier; Billanovich, by contrast, suggested the much later date of 1350.

<sup>36</sup> *Fam.* XVIII, 3, 6–9: 'Monstrum est cogitare quantus ille vir ingenio, quantus studio fuit, unde ille fervor scribendique impetus sancto viro, illa rerum divinarum notitia terrenis dius primum illecebris capto, illa demum laborum patientia seni, illud otium epyscopo, illa romani eloquii facultas afro homini, quamvis, ut idem quodam loco clare innuit, sua etate Afri quidem latinis literis uterentur, de quo proprie dictum putes quod ipse de Marco Varone dixit Terrentianum sequens: "Vir," inquit, "doctissimus undecunque Varro, qui tam multa legit ut aliquid ei scribere vacavisse miremur, tam multa scripsit quam multa vix quenquam legere posse credamus." Sed ut alia omittam eiusdem ingenii monimenta, seu que multa sunt michi, seu quibus adhuc careo, et rursum seu que *Retractationum* suarum libris idem ipse commemorat, seu que ibi vel oblita forte vel neglecta vel nondum scripta preteriit, ad que omnia relegendum vita humana vix sufficit, quis eum si nil aliud egisset, unum hoc scribere potuisse non stupeat? Nullum unum et unius opus hominis latinis editum literis huic magnitudini conferendum scio, nisi forte sit alter eiusdem liber in epystolas Pauli, quod nisi fallit extimatio frustraturque memoria, prope ad eandem literarum congeriem videtur accedere, vel Titi Livii romanarum rerum liber ingens, quem in partes quas decades vocant, non ipse qui scripsit sed fastidiosa legentium scidit ignavia. Huic tali amicitia tue dono, preter eam quam loquor magnitudinem, et libri decor et vetustioris litere maiestas et omnis sobrius accedit ornatus, ut cum oculis ibi figere ceperim, siticulose hircinis in morem nequeam nisi plenos avellere. Ita sepe michi dies impransus preterlabitur, nox insomnis...' Quoting Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, VI, 2, itself quoting Terentianus Maurus, *De litteris, syllabis et metris Horatii*, 2846.

<sup>37</sup> *Fam.* XXIV, 6, 7: 'secundus vir quidam sanctissimus et divino ingenio, Augustinus, origine afer eloquio romanus, cum quo utinam de libris divina tractantibus deliberare

Augustine provided Petrarch with a constant point of reference. References to and quotations from St. Augustine's works occur with remarkable frequency, and one is struck by the importance which Petrarch attached to his words. In total, Berthold Ullman estimated that Petrarch cited St. Augustine on approximately 1200 occasions in his writings,<sup>38</sup> and Pierre de Nolhac counted some 600 references to the saint's works in the letters alone.<sup>39</sup>

As the allegorical ascent of Mont Ventoux suggests, Petrarch's effusive praise of and numerous references to St. Augustine betray the fact that he found in the bishop of Hippo's works a source of profound inspiration and authority. For Petrarch, St. Augustine was, for example, a model to be emulated. In the consciously confessional *Secretum*, Petrarch cast a literary representation of Augustine 'in the role not so much of a father confessor as of an *alter ego*: himself as he felt he ought to be', and the connection between the two is underscored by the fact that Lady Truth gently reminds her deputy that he suffered from the same troubles as 'Franciscus' while imprisoned in his body.<sup>40</sup> So, too, in the *De otio religioso*, Petrarch admitted that, having learned from the *Confessiones* how to live virtuously, he set out to follow the example of the saint's life with devotion,<sup>41</sup>

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potuisses, magnus nempe theologus futurus, qui eam quam poteras theologiam tam scrupulose tractasti, tam anxie divisisti.' Cf. *Fam.* XVIII, 3, 3: 'Hos inter estus puppim tu michi prevalidam et nauclerum industrium destinasti, divini ingenii Augustinum, cuius opus immensum—quod vulgo tres in partes, apud quosdam plurifariam divisum, multis et magnis voluminibus continetur—totum uno volumine comprehensum et a te michi transmissum letus stupensque suscepi...'; *Fam.* XIX, 18, 7: 'Non exequor que ibidem Augustinus idem divino strinxit ingenio, quod et tibi notissima sunt et michi providendum ne si cuncta complecti velim, magnitudo rerum modum vincat epystole.'

<sup>38</sup> Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 130.

<sup>39</sup> De Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme*, 2:192, n. 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Secretum*, proem: 'Ad eum siquidem conversa, ac meditationem ipsius profundissimam interrumpens sic ait:—Care michi ex milibus Augustine; hunc tibi devotum nosti, nec te latet quam periculosa et longa egritudine tentus sit, que eo propinquior morti est quo eger ipse a proprii morbi cognitione remotior!'; text edited by E. Carrara in *Prose*, ed. G. Martellotti, P. G. Ricci, E. Carrara, E. Bianchi (Milan and Naples, 1955), 22–218, here 24.

<sup>41</sup> *De otio religioso*, II, 7: 'Sero, iam senior, nullo duce, primo quidem hesitare, deinde vero pedetentim retrocedere ceperam, ac disponente Illo, qui malis nostris ad gloriam suam semper, sepe etiam ad salutem nostram uti novit, inter fluctuationes meas, quas si percurrere cepero et michi confessionum liber ingens ordiendus erit, Augustini *Confessionum* liber obvius fuit. Cur enim de illo non fateor, quod ille de M. Tullio fatetur? Ille me primum ad amorem veri exivit, ille me primum docuit suspirare salubriter, qui tam diu ante letaliter suspirassem. Quiescat in secula sine fine felix, cuius manu ille michi primum liber oblatus est, qui vago animo frenum dedit. Delectatus sum ingenio hominis sano quidem et excelso, delectatus eloquio non nimis culto, sed sobrio et gravi, delectatus doctrina multiplici et fructuosa et varia.'; text ed. G. Rotondi, *Studi e Testi* 195, (Vatican City, 1958), here 104, ll. 5–16; hereafter this edition will be referred to as 'Rotondi'. The



and in a letter written to Giovanni d'Arezzo from Milan on 1 January 1354, not only affirmed that he suffered from the same conflict of secret cares that had exercised St. Augustine, but also subtly suggested that he was able quite literally to re-live the saint's conversion experiences by virtue of his proximity to the chapel in which Augustine was baptised.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, Augustine's writings offered Petrarch not only an archetype for the performance of his inner struggles, but also an authority for his humanistic preoccupations. On the one hand, Petrarch took from St. Augustine the desire to 'confess' his worldly failures and his spiritual longings. The *Secretum*, for example, not only begins in a manner evocative of the openings of Augustine's *Soliloquies* and Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae*,<sup>43</sup> but also functions as a work of confession (albeit of questionable autobiographical veracity) that was designed to parallel Augustine's account of his own life. Similarly, the *Canzoniere*, too, fulfils a confessional role, and the opening and closing verses in particular seem to reflect a desire to review the sins of the past in the hope of achieving peace in the presence of God after death.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, Petrarch viewed St. Augustine as a bridge between classical and Christian culture. As he indicated on several occasions, Petrarch sensed that Augustine's

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division of the text by books and chapters follows *On Religious Leisure*, ed. and trans. S. S. Schearer (New York, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> *Fam.* XVII, 10, 13–14: 'Libet tanti viri illius angustias meminisse et intestinum illud animi sui bellum, in quo, sicut dignum erat, pars tandem victa deterior clarissimum et eternum meliori prebuit triumphum; idque eo libentius recordor quia res in hac eadem urbe ubi ego nunc simile quiddam experior, gesta est. Ambrosii basilica sola est inter domum quam inhabito, et cappellam perexiguam, ubi in archano conflictu dissidentium curarum tandem victor Augustinus, sacro fonte ab eodem lotus Ambrosio viteque prioris solitudine liberatus est.'

<sup>43</sup> *Secretum*, proem.; *Prose*, 22. D. Marsh, *The Quattrocento Dialogue* (Cambridge MA, 1980), 44. In an early essay on the evolution of the *Secretum*, Baron suggested that the proem 'seems to place the location unequivocally in the Vaucluse [*sic.*]' Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, 62. Although Baron might not be altogether wrong in highlighting the possibility that Petrarch might have been willing to allow his reader (whoever he might have been) to identify the setting of the proem with Vaucluse, an awareness of the literary precedents for the trope and a recognition of the paucity of direct evidence for a definite location in the proem itself seem to indicate rather that it was intended as a deliberately 'other-worldly' setting in imitation of Boethius and Augustine; q.v. Boethius, *De cons. phil.*, I; Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, i, 1.

<sup>44</sup> This point is explored interestingly by Sara Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses. Text and Subtext in the "Rime Sparse"* (Columbia, 1985), 95–126. Note, for example, the implied parallel between the closing prayer of the final verse (*Canz.* 366, ll. 135–7: 'raccomandami al tuo Figliuol, verace | omo et verace Dio, | ch' accolga 'l mio spirito ultimo in pace.'), and both the opening sentiments and the closing prayer of the *Confessiones* (Augustine, *Conf.* I, i: 'inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te'; XIII, xxxv: 'Domine deus, pacem da nobis...').



debt to the ancient classics foreshadowed, and authorised, his own reading of ancient literature. From Augustine's own experience, it was evident that the reading of pagan works could have a salutary effect in a Christian context. He knew, for example, that Cicero's *Hortensius* had had a defining influence on the trajectory of Augustine's spiritual life,<sup>45</sup> and searched in vain for traces of the lost work in the *De Trinitate*.<sup>46</sup> So too, it was from Augustine that Petrarch came to understand that pagan literature could be adapted to Christian ends. In the *De otio religioso*, for example, he noted with approval that Augustine had used Ciceronian phrases in defence of the Christian faith,<sup>47</sup> and in the same text cited Augustine as an authority for the view that Cicero was one of the most learned and eloquent men of all time.<sup>48</sup>

But Petrarch also saw St. Augustine's writings as a valuable repository of theological learning which could be applied to his own circumstances. Augustine's thought offered Petrarch both a framework for understanding his own inner struggles, and an intellectual authority in spiritual matters. Just as St. Augustine's words had given expression to the religious insights which had come to Petrarch during the ascent of Mont Ventoux, he confessed in the *De otio religioso* that he had been guided away from worldly temptation and towards virtue by St. Augustine's *Confessiones*.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, in castigating Aristotle in the fourth book of the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, it was with reference to Augustine's *De Trinitate* that Petrarch justified his assertion that an understanding of immortality and faith are necessary to the practice of moral philosophy.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Q.v., for example, *Fam.* II, 9.

<sup>46</sup> *Sen.* XVI, 1, 2: 'Quesivi et librum de Laude Philosophie, quod et ipse libri titulus excitabat, et in libris Augustini, quos iam legere ceperam, librum illum ad vite mutationem et ad studium veri multum profuisse compereram. Sic undique dignus videbatur, qui diligentissime quereretur... Demum cum legendo, cuius insatiabilem me natura fecit, in libros Augustini de Trinitate, divinum opus, incidissem, inveni allegatum ibi librum, non quidem quem habebam, sed quem habere credebam, et aliquid ibi de eo libro positum, quo nichil est dulcius.'

<sup>47</sup> *De otio religioso*, I, 8: '... deinde ciceronianis, ut sepe solet, verbis ad presidium nostre sententie usus...'; Rotondi, 53, ll. 32–3.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 5: '... romani princeps eloquii, utque Augustinus ait, unus e numero doctissimorum hominum idemque eloquentissimus omnium, M. Tullius Cicero...' Rotondi, 91, ll. 25–7.

<sup>49</sup> *De otio religioso*, II, 7; Rotondi, 104, ll. 5–16; see above, n. 41.

<sup>50</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, III, 51: 'Que quidem, nequis ex me dici omnia, atque ideo nimis temerarie dici putet, tertiumdecimum De trinitate Augustini librum legat, ubi de hoc ipso contraque philosophos qui fecerunt sibi, suo utor verbo, sicut eorum cuique placuit, vitas suas, multa graviter atque acriter disputata reperiet.' Marsh, 266, quoting Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIII, iv, 7.

Although attitudes towards the nature of Petrarch's relationship with St. Augustine have undergone radical changes in the last 150 years, scholars have long acknowledged the influence which Augustine's writings exerted on Petrarch's spiritual and intellectual development. Despite the stress which they were inclined to place on his classical, humanistic interests, and on his almost Romantic *dissidio*, many nineteenth-century scholars regarded Petrarch's experiential identification with Augustine's path to conversion as an almost axiomatic truth. For Georg Voigt, for example, Augustine not only revealed to him the deepest insights of his own nature, but also gave voice to the struggle which Petrarch always felt within himself.<sup>51</sup> The relationship was seen as a meeting of souls that was intense, personal, and deeply moving. Following Voigt, Pierre de Nolhac argued that Petrarch felt a personal bond with St. Augustine that was stronger than that which he had experienced with any other author.<sup>52</sup>

From the early twentieth century onwards, however, scholars came to recognise that Petrarch's relationship with St. Augustine went beyond mere experiential identification, and extended also to the sphere of literary production. As his works came to be subjected to more searching philological analysis, and greater credence was granted to the Christian aspects of his work, scholars such as Pietro Paolo Gerosa came to accept that Augustine's works furnished him not only with an archetype for the presentation of the *form* of his inner struggles, but also occupied a position of almost equal authority to that of classical literature, particularly as a guide to biblical exegesis, and in shaping his attacks on scholastics.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, numerous studies—such as those of Pierre Courcelle, Giuseppe Billanovich, and Francisco Rico, to name but three<sup>54</sup>—examined Petrarch's reading of works such as the *Confessiones*, the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, and the *De vera religione* more closely, and serious attention began to be given to Petrarch's use of Augustinian motifs in both poetry and prose.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Altertums*, 1:84–5.

<sup>52</sup> De Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme*, 1:27.

<sup>53</sup> Gerosa, *Umanesimo cristiano del Petrarca*, *passim*.

<sup>54</sup> Courcelle, 'Pétrarque lecteur des *Confessions*'; Billanovich, 'Nella biblioteca del Petrarca'; Rico, 'Petrarca y el *De vera religione*'.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, N. Ilicu, *Il Canzoniere petrarchesco e Sant' Agostino* (Rome, 1962); B. Martinelli, *Petrarca e il Ventoso* (Bergamo, 1977); Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses*; Heitmann, 'Augustinus Lehre in Petrarca's *Secretum*'; idem, 'L'insegnamento agostiniano nel *Secretum* del Petrarca'; Billanovich, 'Petrarca e il Ventoso'; Durling, 'The Ascent of Mt. Ventoux and the Crisis of Allegory'; Chiapelli, 'The Motif of Confession in Petrarch's "Mt. Ventoux" '.

In more recent years, the impact of literary theory on Petrarchan studies has helped to bring the impact of Augustine's thought on Petrarch's practices of reading and writing into even sharper focus. Thanks to the research of scholars such as Carol Quillen, it is now widely recognised that Petrarch's 'humanistic' activities were as much inspired by techniques recovered from St. Augustine's works as they were by his reading of classical literature, and the Augustinian dimension of his intertextual practices in particular has been brought to light.<sup>56</sup>

Despite this, Augustine's influence on the *content* of Petrarch's thought has often been regarded rather lightly. With the exception of some earlier figures who were inclined to dismiss Augustine's influence in this regard altogether,<sup>57</sup> scholars have generally come to believe that Petrarch made inconsistent and uneven use of St. Augustine's works in approaching questions of moral philosophy. This view has been expressed in a variety of different ways, but in each case, Petrarch's supposedly ambiguous relationship with St. Augustine has been presented as a component of a broader and wilful equivocation between divergent, and even contradictory, philosophical positions.

For some scholars, Petrarch's thought is characterised by continuous, unresolved conflict and a persistent sense of uncertainty in all respects. Noting the obsession with which he revised his works and grappled with what appeared to be the same intellectual problems throughout his life, Umberto Bosco argued that Petrarch was best seen as a man 'senza storia' and cautioned that it would be misguided to look either for logical development or for consistency in his thought.<sup>58</sup> Giving credence to this view in his influential study of the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Klaus Heitmann contended that while many of the moral problems with which Petrarch grappled were ostensibly Augustinian in form, his thought was a patchwork quilt of mutually contradictory opinions, in which 'Augustinian' positions emphasising the importance of faith and grace were juxtaposed with Stoic or Peripatetic precepts stressing the role of reason and the will without any attempt at harmonisation.<sup>59</sup> So too, for Fritz Schalk, the *De vita solitaria* was essentially a shapeless melange of contrasting

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<sup>56</sup> C. E. Quillen, 'Plundering the Egyptians: Petrarch and Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*', in *Reading and Wisdom. The De doctrina christiana of Augustine in the Middle Ages*, ed. E. D. English (Notre Dame, 1995), 143–72; eadem, *Rereading the Renaissance*.

<sup>57</sup> Notable in this regard is Eppelsheimer, *Petrarca*.

<sup>58</sup> Bosco, *Petrarca*, 7, 9.

<sup>59</sup> Heitmann, *Fortuna und Virtus*.

attitudes recovered willy-nilly from different philosophical traditions, and displaying no noticeable attachment to St. Augustine's theology.<sup>60</sup>

Indeed, this intellectual uncertainty and ambivalence towards St. Augustine has sometimes been viewed as expressing the very essence of Petrarch's humanistic understanding of rhetoric. In the wake of Paul Oskar Kristeller's essay 'Humanism and Scholasticism in the Renaissance', Petrarch came to be viewed as having perceived a tension between the persuasive function of rhetoric and the demands of moral philosophy. In the eyes of Jerrold Seigel, for example, Petrarch saw philosophy as subservient to rhetoric, and felt able to express whatever philosophical position was most appropriate on a given occasion, a perspective which, Seigel claimed, he took from Cicero.<sup>61</sup> In this, St. Augustine played a comparatively minor role: on the one hand, his thought represented a life beyond the reach of eloquence, and on the other hand, those aspects of his theology which did feature in Petrarch's works were subordinate to the influence of classical philosophy. Similarly, for Charles Trinkaus, Petrarch's outlook remained that of a poet, and his attitude towards St. Augustine was correspondingly equivocal.<sup>62</sup> On numerous occasions, Trinkaus argued, Petrarch disregarded the details of Augustine's theology and, in the *Secretum*, attributed to his literary representation of the saint opinions which, Trinkaus claimed, were at variance with Augustine's actual views because, in the final analysis, the search for virtue which Petrarch had encountered in the *Confessiones* was of greater importance to him than the niceties of doctrine.

For other scholars, however, a measure of logical development can be imputed to Petrarch's thought, and it has been suggested that sufficient information exists to describe the trajectory of his intellectual evolution. In the wake of Vittorio Rossi's pioneering work on the dating of the *Familiars* in the 1930s,<sup>63</sup> scholars endeavoured to detect apparent shifts in Petrarch's attitude towards Christian and classical texts in relation to the revised chronology which had been suggested for his correspondence. In these studies, Augustine constituted a vital barometer of Petrarch's attach-

<sup>60</sup> F. Schalk, 'Zu Petrarca's «De vita solitaria» (Buch II),' in *Il Petrarca ad Arquà. Atti del Convegno di Studi nel VI Centenario (1370-1374)*, ed. G. Billanovich and G. Frasso (Padua, 1975), 257-68.

<sup>61</sup> Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 31-62.

<sup>62</sup> Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 1:3-50; idem, *The Poet as Philosopher*, *passim*.

<sup>63</sup> Rossi, 'Sulla formazione delle raccolte epistolari petrarchesche'. For a useful survey of the scholarship of this period, see Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, 17-50.

ment to 'Christian' themes and positions, and was implicitly contrasted with the appearance of 'classical' philosophical perspectives. Looking at the different versions of the *De viris illustribus*, for example, Martellotti—followed by Ricci and Wilkins—detected a gradual shift away from an early preoccupation with the classical past and towards a more pronounced emphasis on the heritage of Scripture and the Christian Middle Ages.<sup>64</sup> Bringing greater precision to this view, Carlo Calcaterra endeavoured to demonstrate that the *Secretum* could be viewed as the product of a period of religious 'crisis' between 1342 and 1343 which signalled the substitution of overtly Christian concerns for the classical enthusiasm of his youth, and marked the appearance of 'Augustinian' positions where more 'humanistic' views had previously been favoured.<sup>65</sup> As debates about the dating of Petrarch's changing outlook intensified in later years,<sup>66</sup> the *Secretum* increasingly became the focus of attention, and the search for 'Christian' overtones came to be replaced by a more obvious interest in the detection of explicitly 'Augustinian' influences. Attempting to uncover compositional layers of the dialogue by identifying variations of style and argumentation, Hans Baron and Francisco Rico endeavoured to utilise supposed contradictions between Petrarch's use of 'Stoic' voluntarism and 'Augustinian' fideism in the text.<sup>67</sup>

Even accounting for disagreements over the nature of Petrarch's intellectual development, it must be granted that there is much to support the contention that Petrarch's attitude towards St. Augustine's theology was ambivalent, and that he was induced into equivocation by apparent contradictions between divergent intellectual traditions. His first eclogue, written between 1346 and 1348, suggests an uncertainty over whether to admire classical poetry—represented by Virgil and Homer—or the Davidic psalms more.<sup>68</sup> In the explanatory letter which he later sent to his brother Gherardo, Petrarch argued that this was primarily a stylistic consideration, but this may also have had an influence on the texts to which

<sup>64</sup> Martellotti, 'Linee di sviluppo dell'umanesimo petrarchesco'; Ricci, 'Per il Petrarca storico e umanista'; Wilkins, *Petrarch's Correspondence*; idem, *The Making of the Canzoniere*; idem, *Studies in the Life and Works of Petrarch*.

<sup>65</sup> Calcaterra, 'La concezione storica del Petrarca'; idem, *Nella selva del Petrarca*.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, Billanovich, 'Nella biblioteca del Petrarca'.

<sup>67</sup> Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*; idem, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*; idem, 'Petrarch's *Secretum*: Was It Revised—and Why?'; Rico, *Vida u obra*.

<sup>68</sup> *Ecl.* 1; text, ed. E. Bianchi, in *Rime, Trionfi e Poesi Latine*, ed. F. Neri, G. Martellotti, E. Bianchi, and N. Sapegno (Milan and Naples, 1951), 808–17; Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 220.

Petrarch turned for conceptual inspiration,<sup>69</sup> a suspicion which seems to be borne out not only by comments in the *Posteritati*,<sup>70</sup> but also by evidence found elsewhere in his letters. Indeed, Petrarch's contemporaries were alive to the apparent ambiguity of his thought. So pronounced was his use of classical texts that friends were perplexed by his stated affection for St. Augustine and suspected that his affection for ancient philosophy was greater than he was prepared to admit. In 1336, for example, Giacomo Colonna light-heartedly accused Petrarch of having read Augustine only with a 'certain simulated goodwill', and of remaining wedded to the works of classical poets and philosophers.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, more than thirty years later, Petrarch was attacked by four Venetian friends for being more of a Ciceronian than a Christian.<sup>72</sup> These accusations, indeed, seem to be mirrored by the shifting weight of quotations in the *Familiare*s. Although he was initially drawn to the moral theology of St. Augustine, Petrarch's enthusiasm for the *De vera religione*, for example, appears to have waned by the time he wrote the first book of his familiar letters. More and more, he found himself turning to classical texts: approving quotations from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, the *De finibus*, and the *De natura deorum* appear with mounting frequency, and although doubts as to the dating of this shift must be acknowledged,<sup>73</sup> it is nevertheless striking that Petrarch does indeed seem to have indulged some uncertainty and ambivalence towards the 'divine genius' of St. Augustine.

<sup>69</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 28–32.

<sup>70</sup> *Posteritati* (*Sen.* XVIII, 1): 'Ingenio fui equo potius quam acuto, ad omne bonum et salubre studium apto, sed ad moralem precipue philosophiam et ad poeticam prono; quam ipse processu temporis neglexi, sacris literis delectatus, in quibus sensi dulcedinem abditam, quam aliquando contempseram, poeticis literis non nisi ad ornatum reservatis. Incubui unice, inter multa, ad notitiam vetustatis, quoniam michi semper etas ista displicuit; ut, nisi me amor carorum in diversum traheret, qualibet etate natus esse semper optaverim, et hanc oblivisci, nisus animo me aliis semper inserere.'; text ed. P. G. Ricci, in *Prose*, 2–19, here 6.

<sup>71</sup> *Fam.* II, 9, 8: 'Dicis me, non modo vulgus insulsum, sed celum ipsum fictionibus tentare; itaque Augustinum et eius libros simulata quadam benivolentia complexum, re autem vera a poetis et philosophis non avelli.'

<sup>72</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, V, 125; Marsh, 330.

<sup>73</sup> While Baron and Rico suggest that the high-watermark of Petrarch's enthusiasm for the *De vera religione* was reached in 1347, and that the renewed influence of classical thought began to be felt by the early 1350s, Bortolo Martinelli has argued in favour of an earlier date. Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 5–6, 218–23; Rico, *Vida u obra*, 51–6, 532–5; Rico, 'Petrarca y el *De vera religione*'; Billanovich, *Petrarca Letterato*, 20, 47–55. B. Martinelli, *Il "Secretum" Conteso* (Naples, 1982). See also the useful response by F. Rico, 'Sobre la cronología del *Secretum*: Las viejas leyendas y el fantasma nuevo de un lapsus bíblico,' *Studi petrarcheschi* n.s. 1 (1984): 51–102.

Indeed, the extent of Petrarch's uncertainty about his attitude towards St. Augustine appears to be reflected in the fact that he seems to have been equally equivocal about the implications of his turning towards classical exemplars. He was certainly not ignorant of the degree to which he appeared to be in thrall to the classics, and was not averse to confessing his concerns. In a letter to Boccaccio most likely written in around 1359, for example, he explained that he had read Virgil, Horace, Livy, and Cicero so many times that their works had become almost like his own, and he no longer felt able to remember whose words they were, or whether they were his or those of someone else.<sup>74</sup> This primarily literary concern had a deeply moral dimension. It is plain in the *Secretum*, for example, that Petrarch was grappling with a perceived tension between the pursuit of literary fame he saw as being compatible with his affection for the pagan classics, and his spiritual health. Similarly, in attempting to explain the allegorical meaning of *Ecl.* 1, Petrarch's defensive tone and strategy are themselves underwritten by an acceptance that questions might be raised about the moral value of both reading and imitating classical texts. In the opening lines of *Fam.* X, 4, he acknowledges that Gherardo might feel that the poetry which looks to Virgil and Homer for inspiration is opposed to theology and the health of the soul, and despite justifying their compatibility, there is a sense in which he too shares the same concern.<sup>75</sup>

Yet if there is considerable evidence to suggest that St. Augustine exercised only an ambivalent influence on the content of Petrarch's thought, it is perhaps too easy to overlook the preconceptions which underpin such an evaluation of his intellectual relationship with the saint. Despite their differences, the scholars who have argued that Petrarch's made inconsistent and uneven use of St. Augustine's theology in his engagement with moral questions have tended to base their analyses on two assumptions about Petrarch's approach to classical literature and his understanding of Augustine's thought. Although in some ways distinct, each of these assumptions is concerned with a particular view of the nature and object

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<sup>74</sup> *Fam.* XXII, 2, 12–13: 'Legi apud Virgilium apud Flaccum apud Severinum apud Tullium; nec semel legi sed milies, nec cucurri sed incubui, et totis ingenii nisibus immoratus sum; mane comedi quod sero digererem, hausi puer quod senior ruminarem. Hec se michi tam familiariter ingessere et non modo memorie sed medullis affixa sunt unumque cum ingenio facta sunt meo, ut etsi per omnem vitam amplius non legantur, ipsa quidem hereant, actis in intima animi parte radicibus, sed interdum obliviscar auctorem, quippe qui longo uso et possessione continua quasi illa prescripserim diuque pro meis habuerim, et turba talium obsessus, nec cuius sint certe nec aliena meminerim.'

<sup>75</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 1.



of Petrarch's *imitatio*. On the one hand, it has been tacitly assumed that Petrarch's frequent references to works of classical literature—particularly those of Cicero and Seneca—betray a willingness to reproduce uncritically the precepts of the various schools of ancient philosophy which the original texts were intended to represent. The inclusion of approving quotations from Cicero in his letters has, for example, been seen as an indication of an insipient Stoicism, while references to Juvenal in the *De vita solitaria* have been presented as evidence of an occasional predilection for aspects of Epicureanism. Quotation is, in other words, viewed as an indication of intellectual affinity, and the inclusion of direct references to classical texts is seen as evidence of a desire to reproduce elements of ancient philosophy in an uncritical manner. On the other hand, interpretations of Petrarch's relationship with St. Augustine have been underwritten by the belief that he perceived there to be an antagonism between monolithic bodies of thought. Presented as a theology preoccupied with the primacy of faith and grace, 'Augustinianism' has been contrasted most forcefully with the rationalism and voluntarism of Stoicism, and with the intellectual flexibility of Peripateticism.

Although each of these tacitly-expressed assumptions is in some ways attractive, the fact that they have been deployed either as a means of reconstructing the trajectory of Petrarch's intellectual development or as a reflection of scholarly perceptions of his humanism, rather than as a means of understanding Petrarch's intellectual debt to St. Augustine's theology *per se*, cautions a degree of scepticism. As a consequence of the objectives which they serve, each of these assumptions attempts to introduce clear distinctions, distinctions which may by their very nature overstate any apparent contradictions between Petrarch's sources of inspiration, and which may ignore Petrarch's capacity to have developed logically coherent responses to the moral questions with which he was preoccupied while drawing on a variety of different sources. As such, each of these assumptions deserves closer attention before we turn towards an analysis of Petrarch's relationship with St. Augustine.

## 2. *Petrarch and Imitatio: Literary Imitation and the 'Anxiety of Influence'*

Despite the high esteem in which Petrarch held the Latin classics, it is perhaps unnecessary to assume that his frequent use of quotations from authors such as Cicero, Virgil, Seneca, and Horace betrays a willingness to reproduce the precepts of classical thought in an uncritical manner.



Although highly conscious of his debt to ancient literature, Petrarch did not seek to reprise either the written style or the intellectual content of the Latin classics, and succeeded in resolving his 'anxiety of influence' in a manner which allowed him to adapt the ancient texts he most admired to his own purposes.

At one level, Petrarch's reading of the Latin classics was motivated by an admiration for the literary texture of authors such as Virgil, Horace, Livy, and Cicero, and as has frequently been pointed out, his own writing is remarkable for the extent to which he strove to revive the standards of classical Latinity. In looking to the style of classical literature, however, Petrarch employed a nuanced form of literary imitation which stressed his own creative independence, and which highlighted his desire to create new works from old materials.<sup>76</sup>

The letter which Petrarch wrote to Boccaccio in around 1359 is of particular interest in this regard. As we have already observed, the awareness which Petrarch displays in this letter of his own proximity to specific authors is striking. Having read Virgil, Horace, Livy, and Cicero 'not once, but a thousand times,' he admitted that their works had become embedded in the very marrow of his bones, and so familiar had their writings become that he was scarcely able to determine whether he was reading the words of these illustrious authors or his own.<sup>77</sup> Petrarch had, in other words, not only read Virgil, Horace, Livy, and Cicero, but had also internalised his reading matter, and had made the works of these authors the archetypes for his own writing so successfully that his words could readily be mistaken for theirs. But instead of being shaped by the desire to ape these luminaries of ancient literature slavishly, as he expected Boccaccio to assume from his striking rhetorical feint, Petrarch's went on to affirm that he sought not to act as another Cicero, Virgil, Horace or Livy, but to imitate their written style in a manner which emphasised his intellectual independence at the same time as it underscored the sources of his literary inspiration.

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<sup>76</sup> The following paragraphs are indebted to Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 81–146 and McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance*, 22–49. G. W. Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance,' *Renaissance Quarterly* 33 (1980): 1–32 is also useful. The seminal contribution of Harold Bloom to the study of the relationship between poets and their precursors must also be acknowledged: H. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1997).

<sup>77</sup> See n. 74, above.

In describing his approach to literary imitation in his letter to Boccaccio, Petrarch used the image of a voyage, and presented himself as a traveller following a route that others had themselves trodden centuries before. Calling on Apollo and Christ to witness that he had striven to distinguish clearly between his other's works and his own,<sup>78</sup> he stated that he intended to follow the path of his antecedents, but not their every step.<sup>79</sup> He looked to Virgil, Horace, Livy, and Cicero, for example, as guides who could walk before him, rather than as figures to whom he would be bound completely: he wished to choose which steps to follow, and which to avoid, and admitted that he would be happy to turn back if he struck out in a new direction only to find the way impassable.<sup>80</sup> Explaining the metaphor, he affirmed that he preferred imitation to mere reproduction, and even then believed that imitation was not to be servile, but was to demonstrate the ingenuity—not the blindness—of the imitator.<sup>81</sup> His style, as he stressed, remained his own, and it would, indeed, be ridiculous for him to try to adopt another's manner.<sup>82</sup> Despite certain stylistic similarities and the frequent use of quotation, his voice remained his own; and while the Latin classics could offer inspiration, he was determined to tread his own path.

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<sup>78</sup> *Fam.* XXII, 2, 14–15: 'Hoc est ergo quod dicebam, notiora magis fallere, que si quando forsitan ex more recursantia in memoriam redeunt, accidit ut nonnunquam occupato et in unum aliquid vehementer intento animo non tantum ut propria sed, quod miraberis, ut nova se offerant... In his quidem discernendis non parvus michi labor oritur; nostrum enim testor Apollinem, unicum etherei Iovis natum, et verum sapientie Deum, Cristum, me nec ullius prede avidum et ut patrimonii sic ingenii alieni spoliis abstinere.'

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 20: 'Sum quem priorum semitam, sed non semper aliena vestigia sequi iuvat...'

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 20–1: 'sum qui satius rear duce caruisse quam cogi per omnia ducem sequi. Nolo ducem qui me vinciat sed precedat; sint cum duce oculi, sit iudicium, sit libertas; non prohibear ubi velim pedem ponere et preterire aliqua et inaccessa tentare; et brevior sive ita fert animus, planior callem sequi et properare et subsistere et divertere liceat et reverti.'

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 20: 'sum qui aliorum scriptis non furtim sed precario uti velim in tempore, sed dum liceat, meis malim; sum quem similitudo delectet, non identitas, et similitudo ipsa quoque non nimia, in qua sequacis lux ingenii emineat, non cecitas non paupertas...'

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 16–17: 'Alioquin multo malim meus michi stilus sit, incultus licet atque horridus, sed in morem toge habilis, ad mensuram ingenii mei factus, quam alienus, cultior ambizioso ornatu sed a maiore ingenio profectus atque undique defluens animi humilis non conveniens stature. Omnis vestris histrionem decet, sed non omnis scribentem stilus; suus cuique formandus servandusque est, ne vel difformiter alienis induti vel concursu plumas suas repetentium volucrum spoliati, cum cornicula rideamur. Et est sane cuique naturaliter, ut in vultu et gestu, sic in voce et sermone quiddam suum ac proprium, quod colere et castigare quam mutare cum facilius tum melius atque felicius sit.'

Expressing his attitude towards the Latin classics rather differently in a letter written to Tommaso da Messina in 1350 or 1351, Petrarch compared the practice of literary imitation to the activity of bees, and used the metaphor to highlight once again his desire not to reproduce the sentiments which he encountered in ancient literature, but to produce new works from the materials it furnished. As Seneca had suggested, Petrarch argued that the man who wished to distinguish himself through *inventio* should imitate the bees which make wax and honey from the flowers they leave behind.<sup>83</sup> There was no doubt that the works which Petrarch most admired offered succour to his interests, and provided him with much food for thought. As he argued, the works of erudite men should be examined, noting their *sententias florentissimas ac suavissimas*, as though one were taking nectar from white lilies.<sup>84</sup> But just as the bees take nectar back to their hive to be made into wax and honey, while leaving the flower intact, so the imitator should transform the abundant and sweet opinions he encountered in his reading into new forms. 'Take care,' Petrarch advised Tommaso,

lest [the nectar] remains in you for a long time in the same condition as when you gathered it: bees would have no glory unless they converted what they had found into something different and better. Thus, if you come across something worthy in your reading or meditation, I exhort you to change it into honey with your style...<sup>85</sup>

As these two letters suggest, the practice of literary imitation was for Petrarch not a mimetic process, but a creatively synthetic endeavour in which the imitator acted not as a conduit for direct transmission, but as an independent craftsman selecting the materials most appropriate to his immediate purpose, regardless of the function they performed in their original context. Petrarch implies that while the works of classical literature were to be read with admiration, there were also to be mined for stylistic qualities or turns of phrase that could be adapted to uses quite different from those intended by their authors.

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<sup>83</sup> *Fam.* I, 8, 2: '...apes in inventionibus imitandas, quae flores, non quales acciperint, referunt, sed ceras ac mella mirifica quadam permixtione conficiunt.' Referring to Seneca, *Ep.* lxxxiv, 3–4.

<sup>84</sup> *Fam.* I, 8, 19: 'perscrutemur doctorum hominum libros, ex quibus sententias florentissimas ac suavissimas eligentes, candida circum lilia fundamur.'

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 23–4: 'Neve diutius apud te qualia decerpseris maneant, cave: nulla quidem esset apibus gloria, nisi in aliud et in melius inventa converterent. Tibi quoque, siqua legendi meditandique studio reppereris, in favum stilo redigenda suadeo...'

The implication that literary imitation involves an acute awareness of the divergence of an imitator from the original sense of his source texts is made more explicit in another letter written to Boccaccio in either 1365 or 1366. In this letter, Petrarch again stressed that the literary imitation should involve more independence of mind than uncritical reproduction, but emphasised that the creativity which was intrinsic to imitation should employ literary echoes to stress the author's distance from—not his proximity to—his source texts. In using a style that recalled that of other authors, the imitator should not aim to give his work the appearance of an obvious pastiche, but should invite his reader to observe the subtle ways in which his work differed from the texts to which it referred. To use Harold Bloom's terminology, Petrarch suggests that his creative enterprise was characterised not by *apophrades*, but by a combination of *clinamen* and *tessera*.<sup>86</sup> 'The imitator should take care,' Petrarch wrote,

that what he writes should be similar, but not identical [to the original], and that the similarity should not be that of a portrait to the person whom it depicts—in which case, the greater the similarity, the greater the praise accruing to the work—but that of a son to his father. While there is often a great difference in particular features in them, there is a certain shadow, what our painters call an 'air', which is most visible in the face and in the eyes, which makes the similarity. The moment the son is seen, he reminds us of the father, although if the matter is reduced to measurement, everything would be different; but there is something mysterious, I know not what, that has this power. So we should see to it that while something should be similar, there are many dissimilarities, and that similarity itself should be concealed, so that it should not be possible to detect it without the quiet searching of the mind, and that the similarity should be intuitively known more readily than it can be described. We may, therefore, use another's qualities and colours, but we should abstain from his words; in the one, the similarity is concealed, in the other, it is conspicuous; the one makes poets, the other apes. Seneca's counsel, which before Seneca was that of Horace, should thus stand firm, that we should write as the bees make sweetness, not by preserving the flowers, but by transforming [the nectar] into honey, so that one thing is produced from many and various [others], different and better.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, 14–16, 19–76, 139–156.

<sup>87</sup> *Fam.* XXIII, 19, 11–13: '... curandum imitatori ut quod scribit simile non idem sit, eamque similitudinem talem esse oportere, non qualis est imaginis ad eum cuius imago est, que quo similior eo maior laus artificis, sed qualis filii ad patrem. In quibus cum magna sepe diversitas sit membrorum, umbra quedam et quem pictores nostri aerem vocant, qui in vultu inque oculis maxime cernitur, similitudinem illam facit, que statim viso filio, patris in memoriam nos reducat, cum tamen si res ad mensuram redeat, omnia sint diversa;

The role played by literary imitation in shaping Petrarch's approach to the written style of works of classical literature is mirrored by his attitude towards the content of those same texts. Just as his practice of literary imitation was creatively synthetic rather than mimetic, so he approached the substantive arguments of classical thought from an intellectual remove, reading texts critically from the perspective of his own purposes, approving and censuring according to his own standards, and putting quotations and allusions to purposes quite different from those intended by his precursors. As with the style of authors such as Cicero, Virgil, and Seneca, he sought not to reproduce the thought of his antecedents *tout court*, but to shape something new from old materials.

That Petrarch reserved to himself a certain independence of mind is evident from his evaluation of some of the ancient authors he most admired. In the final book of the *Familiars*, for example, Petrarch famously addressed a series of letters to classical authors, and these are remarkable not just for the terms in which he praised particular figures, but also for the extent to which he chose to censure them. The eloquence of these men is beyond question, and is lauded in the most glowing terms. In one letter, Virgil is celebrated as *eloquii splendor, latinae spes altera linguae*,<sup>88</sup> while in another, Cicero is described in a similarly effusive manner as *romani eloquii summe parens*,<sup>89</sup> and in another still, Asinius Pollio is praised in comparable terms.<sup>90</sup> Yet, at the same time as their mastery of the Latin language is acknowledged, attention is drawn to their limitations. In a letter to Pulice da Vicenza, intended as a preface to the following letters to classical authors, Petrarch pointed out that while there was no author who pleased him as much as Cicero, his errors were to be deplored.<sup>91</sup> As Petrarch explained, Cicero's golden eloquence and celestial

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sed est ibi nescio quid occultum quod hanc habeat vim. Sic et nobis providendum ut cum simile aliquid sit, multa sint dissimilia, et id ipsum simile lateat ne deprehendi possit nisi tacita mentis indagine, ut intelligi simile queat potiusquam dici. Utendum igitur ingenio alieno utendumque coloribus, abstinendum verbis; illa enim similitudo latet, hec eminet; illa poetas facit, hec simias. Standum denique Senece consilio, quod ante Senecam Flacci erat, ut scribamus scilicet sicut apes mellificant, non servatis floribus sed in favos versis, ut ex multis et variis unum fiat, idque aliud et melius." ' Q.v. Seneca, *Ep.* lxxxiv, 3–10; Horace, *Carm.* IV, ii, 27–32.

<sup>88</sup> *Fam.* XXIV, 11, 1.

<sup>89</sup> *Fam.* XXIV, 4, 4.

<sup>90</sup> *Fam.* XXIV, 9.

<sup>91</sup> *Fam.* XXIV, 2, 14: 'Quod ego certe iam partim cogito, partim scio, etsi adhuc nullius eque delecter eloquio; nec ipse de quo loquimur, Tullius, ignorat, sepe de propriis graviter questus erroribus...'

genius was counterbalanced by the foolishness of his character and his inconstancy.<sup>92</sup> Through a reading of Cicero's letters to Atticus, which he had discovered in the library of Verona Cathedral in 1345,<sup>93</sup> Petrarch had become conscious of his idol's many failures. In the first of his two letters to the ancient orator, Petrarch reproached Cicero for his political mistakes and his moral errors, and went to some length to draw attention to the apparent contradiction between his philosophical praise of the *vita contemplativa* and his abandonment of rural solitude for public life.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Petrarch's letter to Seneca is concerned largely with reproaching the Stoic for the divergence between his philosophy and his involvement in civic affairs.<sup>95</sup>

While Petrarch's reproaches certainly demonstrate an independence of mind, it is, of course, striking that his criticism of classical authors concentrates on illustrating the extent to which particular figures failed to adhere to the philosophical precepts which they espoused. This should, however, not be seen as an indication of his attachment to the Stoicism of Cicero and Seneca, but as an attempt to judge them by their own standards. Although Petrarch was undoubtedly extremely well-acquainted with the philosophical works of both Cicero and Seneca, he read them with an exceptionally critical eye. Throughout his writings, he took issue with numerous points, and went to considerable lengths to demonstrate his distance from elements of their thought. In the *De vita solitaria*, for example, Petrarch attempted to highlight an apparent inconsistency in Seneca's conception of the *vita contemplativa*, and contrasted his own view of the solitary life with that of the Stoic with evident satisfaction.<sup>96</sup>

But what is most striking about Petrarch's most pointed attacks on ancient philosophy—and particularly Stoicism—is that in criticising par-

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 4: 'Sed quoniam in rebus mortalium nichil constat esse perfectum, nullusque hominum est in quo non aliquid quod merito carpi queat, modestus etiam reprehensor inveniatur, contigit ut dum in Cicerone, velut in homine michi super omnes amicissimo et colendissimo, prope omnia placerent, dumque auream illam eloquentiam et celeste ingenium admirarer, morum levitatem multisque michi deprehensam indiciis inconstantiam non laudarem.'

<sup>93</sup> *Fam.* XXI, 10; XXIV, 3; *Var.* 25; de Nohac, *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme*, 1:222.

<sup>94</sup> *Fam.* XXIV, 3, 6–7: 'Nimirum quid enim iuvat alios docere, quid ornatissimis verbis semper de virtutibus loqui prodest, si te interim ipse non audias? Ah quanto satius fuerat philosopho presertim in tranquillo rure senuisse, de perpetua illa, ut ipse quodam scribis loco, non de hac iam exigua vita cogitantem, nullos habuisse fasces, nullis triumphis inhiasse, nullos inflasse tibi animum Catilinas.' Referring to Cicero, *Ep. ad Att.* X, viii, 8.

<sup>95</sup> *Fam.* XXIV, 5.

<sup>96</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii; *Prose*, 324, quoting Seneca, *Epp.* lv, 8; li, 4; xxviii, 6. For a fuller discussion of Petrarch's response to Seneca's view of the *vita contemplativa*, see ch. 4.

ticular precepts, he indicated that he read classical texts from his own, Christian perspective. Where he lighted upon an attractive position, his approval was based on the apparent agreement between the text and Christian theology, and when he happened upon an argument which displeased him, his displeasure was motivated by the divergence of the text from the precepts of Christian thought. In rebutting the accusations of his four Venetian friends in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, for example, Petrarch affirmed that Cicero's works, despite their remarkable eloquence, were marred by *fabella* about religion.<sup>97</sup> Although there were many points at which Cicero wrote almost like a Christian and appeared to express pleasingly monotheist views, Petrarch lamented the fact that he continually returned to his pagan polytheism like a dog returns to its vomit.<sup>98</sup> Hence, Petrarch was later able to assert that 'when it comes to pondering or discussing religion—the highest truth, true happiness, and eternal salvation—then I am certainly neither a Ciceronian nor a Platonist, but a Christian,'<sup>99</sup> and could affirm that despite his admiration for Cicero, he did not imitate him, but strove to do precisely the opposite for fear that in imitation he would become something which he did not condone in others.<sup>100</sup> And it was as a Christian that he was able to defend the reading of Cicero's works on the grounds that the Roman orator was both right *and* wrong. On the one hand, Petrarch was 'certain that Cicero himself would have been a Christian if he had been able to see Christ or grasp his teaching,'<sup>101</sup> and, on the other hand, he followed Jerome and Augustine in accepting that it was a good thing to be aware of Cicero's errors so that his Christian faith may be strengthened in the face of the heresy of its enemies.<sup>102</sup> In other words, reading Cicero and the Latin classics through the

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<sup>97</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 56: 'Adhuc tamen poetarum et philosophorum libros lego, Ciceronis ante alios, cuius apprime et ingenio et stilo semper ab adolescentia delectatus sum. Invenio eloquentie plurimum et verborum elegantium vim maximam. Quod ad deos ipsos... quodque omnino ad religionem spectat, quo disertius dicitur, eo michi inanior est fabella...' Marsh, 272.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 60–76; Marsh, 274–90.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 128: 'At ubi de religione, id est de summa veritate et de vera felicitate deque eterna salute cogitandum incidit aut loquendum, non ciceronianus certe nec platonius, sed cristianus sum...' Marsh, 332; trans. Marsh, 333.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 127: '... nec tamen ut mirari, sic et imitari, cum potius in contrarium laborem, ne cuiusquam scilicet imitator sim nimius, fieri metuens quod in aliis non probo.' Marsh, 332.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 128: 'quippe cum certus michi videar, quod Cicero ipse cristianus fuisset, si vel Cristum videre, vel Cristi doctrinam percipere potuisset.' Marsh, 332, trans. Marsh, 333.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 126, 128; Marsh, 330–2.



lens of his Christian preoccupations, Petrarch felt able to take from these texts those aspects which appeared to tessellate with his own outlook, and to use those excerpts of which he disapproved to deepen his own faith. As with his attitude towards the written style of ancient authors, Petrarch sought not to reproduce what he read, but to use his own independent critical judgement to adapt appropriate elements to his own ends.

Given Petrarch's conception of literary imitation, and the manner in which he approached the substance of classical philosophy, therefore, there is good reason to question the assumption that his frequent use of quotations betrays a genuine intellectual affinity with ancient schools of thought. Indeed, his attitude towards the Latin classics was very much like that of a magpie: selecting those shining baubles which appealed most to his tastes, he was able to fashion a nest for his own thoughts regardless of the original context of his materials. To put this rather less prosaically, we should be prepared to indulge the possibility that Petrarch mined classical literature not only for stylistic devices that he could imitate creatively, but also for gnomic quotations suitable to his immediate purposes, and employed turns of phrase or expressions from ancient works in expressing points which would have been foreign to the authors whom he admired most strongly.

### 3. *Petrarch, Augustine, and the Latin Classics*

Just as it would be incautious to assume that Petrarch wished to reproduce elements of classical philosophy in an uncritical manner, it is perhaps too easy to overstate any apparent contradictions between Petrarch's sources of inspiration, and to ignore his capacity to have achieved a harmony between classical and Christian traditions in his approach to moral questions. If he was indeed tormented by tensions between his admirations for the Latin classics and the moral theology of St. Augustine, it is unnecessary to assume that this emerged out of an antagonism between two monolithic bodies of thought. Although Petrarch did recognise the Stoics and the Peripatetics—known to him primarily through the works of Cicero and Seneca—and St. Augustine as the authors of distinct philosophical systems, it is important to bear in mind not only that he was capable of employing passages from classical literature in a manner at variance to the intentions of their authors, but also that he was aware of the possibility of reconciling apparently divergent strands of thought within a discourse of faith and reason propounded by St. Augustine himself.



Although in later life, St. Augustine advocated a fideistic theology which stressed the importance of faith and grace in the attainment of salvation, he had earlier been preoccupied with the problem of synthesising his burgeoning Christian beliefs with his admiration for classical philosophy, particularly the 'Academic' Stoicism of Cicero's *Hortensius*, which he had first read at the age of nineteen,<sup>103</sup> and Seneca's letters.<sup>104</sup> Following his conversion in August 386, Augustine composed a series of works—including the *Soliloquies* (winter 386), the *De immortalitate animae* (early 387), the *De libero arbitrio* (388–91), and the *De vera religione* (389–91)—in which he used the problem of temptation as an opportunity to 'transpose much inherited Stoicism into a form of [Christian] Platonism,' as John Rist has put it.<sup>105</sup> Espousing views in these works which he later came to revoke or qualify, particularly in the wake of the Pelagian controversy, Augustine attempted to adapt the Stoic doctrine of the will such that it became a form of Christian orientation towards God, and strove to reinvent the classical notion of *sapientia* in such a way that it would admit the possibility of attaining to a truth through the application of reason in the context of faith.

As Heiko Oberman has observed, the fourteenth century witnessed 'a revival of Augustine which may well lay claim to the much abused designation Renaissance.'<sup>106</sup> From the 1330s onwards, St. Augustine came to be viewed not only as one of the Church Fathers, 'but rather as the authoritative and definitive interpreter of the one *Evangelium* located in the Scriptures,<sup>107</sup> and the growing importance attached to his authority is evident in the compilation of Bartolomeo Carusio of Urbino's *Milleloquium S. Patris Augustini*, which contains more than 15,000 quotations

<sup>103</sup> Augustine, *Conf.*, III, iv; VIII, vii. See, for example, P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, new ed. (London, 2000), 69–120; G. Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, 3rd ed. (Norwich, 2002), 57–103; J. J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine: An Introduction to the Confessions of St. Augustine* (London and New York, 1980), 173–209. For the development of Augustine's attitude towards the *Hortensius*, see H. Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 2 vols. (Göteborg, 1967), 2:486–97. For the influence of Cicero's works on the young Augustine, see M. Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1958), 1:131–78.

<sup>104</sup> Note that Cicero is paired with Seneca in Augustine's account of his discussions with Faustus: Augustine, *Conf.* V, vi. On St. Augustine's relationship with Seneca, see, for example, H.-I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et le Fin de la Culture Antique* (Paris, 1949), 169–73; J. Rist, 'Faith and Reason,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. E. Stump and N. Kretzmann (Cambridge, 2001), 26–39, here 32–3.

<sup>105</sup> Rist, 'Faith and Reason,' 33.

<sup>106</sup> H. A. Oberman, 'Fourteenth-Century Religious Thought: A Premature Profile,' *Speculum* 53/1 (1978): 80–93, here 86.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

from Augustine's works, carefully organised under 1081 headings.<sup>108</sup> What is particularly striking about this 'Augustinian Renaissance', however, is the fact that Augustine's writings received increasing attention as sources for the relationship between faith, grace, and reason.<sup>109</sup> Although the role they accorded to grace was somewhat different, Thomas Bradwardine (c.1300–49) and Gregory of Rimini (c.1300–58), both looked to St. Augustine as an authority for understanding man's capacity to overcome temptation, and, in their sustained attack on Pelagianism, focussed attention on the function of reason, free will, and grace under Augustine's influence.<sup>110</sup> This dimension of Augustine's thought continued to exert considerable fascination throughout the century, and friars such as Ugolino of Orvieto (c.1300–73), Johannes Klenkok (c.1310–74), Johannes Hitalingen (d. 1392), and Johannes Zacharie (fl. 1380–post 1400) deserve particular mention.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, it is remarkable that Augustine's works came to be seen as precedents for the use of classical quotations in theological discussions, and there is good reason to view him having played an important part in ushering in what Beryl Smalley has described as a form of 'proto-humanism'.<sup>112</sup> In the same way as he appealed to the authority of St. Augustine in theological matters, Bradwardine, for example, appears to have followed Augustine's example in littering his *De Causa Dei* with quotations from classical literature, especially Virgil and Ovid.

<sup>108</sup> On the *Milleloquium*, see R. Arbesmann, 'The Question of Authorship of the *Milleloquium Veritatis Sancti Augustini*,' *Analecta Augustiniana* 43 (1980): 165–86.

<sup>109</sup> For the diffusion of St. Augustine's works, see the recent study by Gorman, *The Manuscript Traditions of the Works of St. Augustine*.

<sup>110</sup> Oberman, 'Fourteenth-Century Religious Thought', 86–9; B. Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1960); G. Leff, *Bradwardine and the Pelagians: A Study of his "De Causa Dei" and its Opponents* (Cambridge, 1958); idem, *Gregory of Rimini: Tradition and Innovation in the Fourteenth Century* (Manchester, 1961); H. A. Oberman, *Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine, A Fourteenth-Century Augustinian: A Study of His Theology in its Historical Context* (Utrecht, 1958).

<sup>111</sup> M. W. F. Stone, 'Augustine and medieval philosophy,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Stump and Kretzmann, 253–66, here 261. On these figures, see A. Zumkeller, *Hugolin von Orvieto und seine theologische Erkenntnislehre* (Würzburg, 1941); idem, 'Die Augustinerschule des Mittelalters: Vertreter und philosophisch-theologische Lehre,' *Analecta Augustiniana* 27 (1964): 167–262; idem, 'Johannes Klenkok OSA (+1374) im Kampf gegen den 'Pelagianismus' seiner Zeit: Seine Lehre über Gnade, Rechtfertigung und Verdienst,' *Recherches Augustiniennes* 13 (1978): 231–333; idem, 'Der Augustinermonch Johannes Hitalinger von Basel (gest. 1392) über Urstand, Erbsünde, Gnade und Verdienst,' *Analecta Augustiniana* 43 (1980): 57–162.

<sup>112</sup> Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity*.

Petrarch had direct contact with this 'Augustinian Renaissance'. He was, for example, acquainted with a number of Augustinian canons,<sup>113</sup> who were instrumental in driving renewed interest in Augustine's works, and although he seems not to have been obviously aware of the anti-Pelagian tracts of figures like Bradwardine and Gregory of Rimini, his circle in Avignon seems to have been sufficiently well-connected with contemporary intellectual trends to observe the growing importance attached to Augustine's writings, and particularly to his earliest works.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, Petrarch not only warmly commended Bartolomeo of Urbino's *Milleloquium*, but also provided an introduction to the text.<sup>115</sup> Of more telling importance, however, is the fact that Petrarch, like many of his contemporaries, was familiar not only with Augustine's later fideistic thought, but also with his earlier efforts to integrate elements of classical philosophy into the framework of Christian Neo-Platonism.<sup>116</sup> As well as having read the *Confessiones* and observed the important role played by the *Hortensius* in the saint's path to conversion, he was, as we have already observed, well acquainted with two of Augustine's most important works of synthesis from the period immediately following his conversion. His knowledge of the *De vera religione* (389–91) was, for example, considerable, and he was sufficiently impressed by the *Soliloquies* (winter 386) to include it on the list of his favourite books.<sup>117</sup> By the same token, at least three of the other works which Petrarch is certain to have known date from this phase of St. Augustine's intellectual development: the *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII* (388–96), and the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* (begun 392) certainly

<sup>113</sup> U. Mariani, *Il Petrarca e gli Agostiniani*, Edizioni di storia e letteratura (Rome, 1956).

<sup>114</sup> In his *De viris illustribus*, for example, Giovanni Colonna notes that: "Fertur autem scripsisse libellum *De spiritu et anima* qui nunc apud scolasticos precipue legitur...", MS Bologna, Bibl. Univ. 491 (lat. 296), fol. 15, quoting Vincentius Bellovacensis [Vincent of Beauvais], *Speculum historiale*, XVIII, 55. Quoted in W. Braxton Ross, 'Giovanni Colonna, Historian at Avignon,' *Speculum* 45/4 (1970): 533–63, here 541 n. 30, and as part of the full text of the biography of St. Augustine at 550, ll. 13–14. It is extremely interesting to note that a few lines earlier, Colonna also mentions the *Soliloquies* and the *De immortalitate animae* by name, the only works so mentioned other than the *De pulcro et accepto* and the *Confessiones*: 'Post conversionem vero adhuc cathecuminus scripsit libros *Soliloquiorum* 2; *De immortalitate anime* librum 1...'; Braxton Ross, 'Giovanni Colonna, Historian at Avignon,' 550, ll. 10–11.

<sup>115</sup> Q.v. *Fam.* VIII, 6.

<sup>116</sup> It is somewhat surprising that this point is not noted in the otherwise interesting survey by E. Giannarelli, 'Quale e quanto Agostino ai tempi del Petrarca,' in *Petrarca e Agostino*, ed. Cardini and Coppini, 1–17.

<sup>117</sup> The dating of Augustine's works is taken from the chronological tables in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 3, 64–7, 178–81, 280–3, 380–1.

date to this period, and the extracts included in Floro di Lione's *Expositio epistolarum b. Pauli collecta ex libris S. Augustini* were collected from exegetical works written in 394–5. Indeed, it seems reasonable to observe that, on balance, Petrarch knew St. Augustine's earlier attempts to synthesise classical and Christian traditions at least as fully as he knew the saint's later works, if not more so: the *De doctrina christiana* (396–426), the *De Trinitate* (399–419), the *De civitate Dei* (413–27), the *Retractiones* (426–7), the *De gratia et libero arbitrio* (426–7), and the *Tractatus CXXIV in Iohannis Evangelium* (c. 407/8–c. 416/17) all reflect the thought of the older Augustine, while the *Confessiones* (397–401) constitutes something of a transitional work, and the *Sermones* and the *Epistles* cover virtually the whole of the saint's intellectual life after his conversion. Of these works, it is noteworthy that the fideistic tendencies which Petrarchan scholars are wont to associate with St. Augustine are really only expressed in a completely unambiguous form in the *De civitate Dei* and the *Retractiones*, and the oft-mentioned juxtaposition of grace and reason is brought into focus most clearly in the anti-Pelagian *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, from which Petrarch seems not to have quoted, despite the extensive annotations which he inscribed in his manuscript copy of the work.<sup>118</sup>

Having read a number of St. Augustine's early attempts to synthesise Stoicism with Christian Neo-Platonism before writing many of his most important prose works, Petrarch also acknowledged them as an intellectual bridge between the classical philosophy which he knew primarily from the works of Cicero and Seneca and Christian moral theology. In a letter written on 21 December 1336, Petrarch responded to Giacomo Colonna's light-hearted insinuation that he had 'embraced Augustine and his books with a certain simulated goodwill', but had in truth not 'torn [himself] away from the poets and philosophers'.<sup>119</sup> In rebutting this claim, Petrarch not only pointed out that Augustine had taken a good deal of his theology from Platonic philosophy, but also observed that the saint had been inspired to pursue the Christian truth more ardently by Cicero's works:

<sup>118</sup> On the manuscript annotations, see Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 184–6; it is worth noting that Petrarch appears to have read the *De gratia et libero arbitrio* only towards the end of his life, at some point after c. 1354.

<sup>119</sup> *Fam.* II, 9, 8: 'Dicis me, non modo vulgus insulsum, sed celum ipsum fictionibus tentare; itaque Augustinum et eius libros simulata quadam benivolentia complexum, re autem vera a poetis et philosophis non avelli.'

Augustine, who had not received an interdict in any dream, was not only unashamed to use them with familiarity, but even admitted frankly that he had found in the books of the Platonists a great part of our faith, and from that book of Cicero's which is called the *Hortensius*, had been turned away from all deceitful hope and from the useless disagreements of discordant sects by a miraculous change, [and] had been turned towards the study of the one truth, and inflamed by that book of his, began to fly higher as a result of his changed feelings and abandoned pleasures.<sup>120</sup>

Having observed that St. Augustine had derived so much from both Platonic philosophy and Ciceronian thought, Petrarch asked how it was possible for Giacomo Colonna to question the value of reading 'the poets and the philosophers':

How is either Plato or Cicero able to obstruct the study of the truth, when the school of the one not only does not impugn the true faith but even teaches and proclaims it, and the proper books of the other are guides on the road leading to it?<sup>121</sup>

Of course, Petrarch did not deny that there was much that deserved censure in the works of classical authors, and he acknowledged that Augustine had himself made this point, but he nevertheless accepted that where ancient philosophy was seen as having led Augustine to the true faith it could pose no obstacle.<sup>122</sup> Consequently, as the saint would himself know, Petrarch's attachment to classical literature in no way impinged upon

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 10: 'Augustinum vero, cui nullo somnio interdictum erat, non solum familiariter illis uti non puduit, sed ingenue etiam fateri se in libris Platoniorum magnam fidei nostre partem invenisse, et ex libro Ciceronis qui vocatur *Hortensius*, mutatione mirabili ab omni spe fallaci et ab inutilibus discordantium sectarum contentionibus aversum, ad solius veritatis studium fuisse conversum, et lectione libri illius inflammatum, ut mutatis affectibus et abiectis voluptatibus, volare altius inciperet.'

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 12: 'Quid ergo studio veritatis obesse potest vel Plato vel Cicero, quorum alterius scola fidem veracem non modo non impugnat sed docet et predicat, alterius libri recti ad illam itineris duces sunt?' Petrarch expressed a similar point in rather more forceful terms in a letter addressed to Neri Morando da Forlì in 1359; *Fam.* XXI, 10, 9, 11–12: '... nichil enim contra Cristum Cicero loquitur, quod certe meminerim... Quis michi igitur vere fidei obicem Ciceronem statuatur aut quasi peregrini vel, quod maioris inscitie sit, inimici nominis conflēt invidiam? Cristus equidem Deus noster, Cicero autem nostri princeps eloquii: diversa fatear, adversa negem. Cristus verbum est et virtus et sapientia Dei patris; Cicero multa de verborum arte deque virtutibus et humana sapientia locutus est, vera utique et idcirco veritatis Deo absque ulla dubitatione gratissima. Cum enim Deus veritas viva sit, cum, ut ait pater Augustinus, "omne verum a veritate verum sit", haud dubie quicquid ab ullo verum dicitur, a Deo est.' Quoting Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, xv, 27.

<sup>122</sup> *Fam.* II, 9, 13: 'Nec tamen ideo negaverim multa apud illos esse que vitari oporteat, cum et apud nostros quedam sint periculosa incautis, et Augustinus ipse, in quodam operoso volumine, de uberrima messe suorum studiorum internascentis erroris lolium proprio pollice decerpit.' Referring to Augustine, *Retractiones*, II.

his fondness for St. Augustine's theology or upon his appreciation of the bishop of Hippo's exposition of the truth faith precisely because he recognised that Augustine had made extensive use of ancient philosophy in his early expositions of the Christian faith.<sup>123</sup>

The awareness of St. Augustine's early attempts to adapt Stoic thought to Christian Neo-Platonism which Petrarch displays in his letter to Giacomo Colonna is a telling indication of his subtle and nuanced understanding of the saint's thought. Far from knowing St. Augustine only as the author of a monolithic, fideistic theology which stood in contrast to the rationalism of 'Academic' Stoicism, Petrarch was well acquainted with the fact that he had developed a theological approach which was much more sympathetic to the precepts of classical philosophy earlier in his life as a Christian, and evidently appreciated this fact.

But Petrarch's knowledge of St. Augustine's early thought, and his appreciation of the saint's youthful reconciliation of classical philosophy and Christian theology also have considerable implications for the manner in which he approached the Latin classics, and, by extension, for the manner in which we should view quotations from ancient sources in attempting to reconstruct his engagement with moral questions.

It has already been observed that Petrarch's use of quotation did not necessarily mean intellectual affinity any more than literary imitation meant reproduction: Petrarch read works of classical literature from a critical distance and adapted elements of ancient texts to his own, Christian purposes. But the fact that Petrarch knew not only the fideistic dimensions of St. Augustine's theology, but also the saint's earlier, more rationalistic works suggests that his appropriation of classical adages was informed not by a willingness to indulge an ambivalence between conflicting, monolithic schools of thought, but by a capacity to weave a cloth with which to clothe his moral problems from weft drawn from complementary elements of both the classical and Christian traditions. Recognising that St. Augustine had been an avid student of Cicero, and approving of the Christian moral theology which developed out of his reading of the Latin classics and Neoplatonic philosophy, Petrarch had a precedent for the selective use of classical texts in a Christian context. Having read works such as the *Soliloquies* and the *De vera religione*, it would have

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<sup>123</sup> *Fam.* II, 9, 5: 'In hoc igitur ancipiti et lubrico et suspecto itinere, siquem forte tam cautum vel natura vel studium fecisset, ut mundi fraudibus elusis, mundum ipse deciperet, frontem scilicet ostendens populo similem, tota intus mente dissimilis...'

been perfectly legitimate for Petrarch to have mined Cicero's dialogues and Seneca's letters—for example—for gnomic quotations and ancillary support while remaining true to St. Augustine's early moral theology. It may therefore be possible to consider the possibility that the enthusiasm with which Petrarch appears to have cited classical works need not be viewed as an indication of his veering towards Stoic or Peripatetic positions, but may instead be seen as a reflection of his adaptation of his classical tastes to a more coherent and consistent attachment to the theology of St. Augustine.

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From our analysis of Petrarch's approach to the Latin classics and of his appreciation of St. Augustine, it seems that there is good reason to treat the two assumptions on which scholars have based their evaluation of his debt to the bishop of Hippo's theology with some scepticism. If there is no evidence to suggest that Petrarch ever sought to reproduce elements of classical philosophy in an uncritical manner, and no reason to suppose that his knowledge of St. Augustine's works was restricted to the later, fideistic treatises, there are grounds to question the suggestion that Petrarch's attitude towards the content of the saint's thought was equivocal and inconsistent, and to challenge interpretations of the trajectory of his intellectual development. Rather than assuming either that Petrarch abandoned his early enthusiasm for St. Augustine's theology for a more ardent classicism (or *vice versa*), or that certain of his works should be viewed as a patchwork quilt of contrasting philosophical positions, it is reasonable to ask whether Petrarch's use of classical quotations and references may be read more convincingly as an expression of his having read the Latin classics through the lens of St. Augustine's early theology, and whether often neglected works, such as the *De otio religioso*, respond to moral questions in a manner more akin to supposedly inconsistent, or 'classical' works such as the *Secretum* than has previously been thought. Similarly, even some of the most apparently 'classical' elements of Petrarch's thought, such as his understanding of eloquence, may merit re-evaluation. In turn, given the importance of St. Augustine's influence to our understanding the nature of Petrarch's humanism, a more searching analysis of Augustinian dimensions of his writings may give cause to re-evaluate the manner in which Petrarch's moral thought was read (or mis-read) by later Renaissance humanists. It is to these questions that the following chapters will now turn.





## CHAPTER TWO

### STOICISM AND 'AUGUSTINIANISM' IN THE *SECRETUM*

#### 1. Felicitas, Virtus, Voluptas, and Accidia

For Petrarch, *felicitas* was the primary motivation for ethical enquiry, and a true understanding of its nature and implications was essential to the elaboration of a valid moral philosophy. In the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, Petrarch addressed precisely this point in explaining his refusal to accept many of the arguments adduced by Aristotle. Defending himself against the accusations of his four Venetian friends, Petrarch pointed out that not merely was it not blasphemous to question Aristotle's ethical views, but it was, in fact, sacrilegious to *adhere* to many of the philosopher's opinions on moral questions.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle's major fault lay not in the multiplicity of unimportant respects in which he had 'wandered from the path', but in his failure to base his moral philosophy on a true understanding of *felicitas*.<sup>2</sup> Although Aristotle had written on the question of happiness in the *Ethics*, he was 'so completely ignorant of true happiness that any devout old woman, or any faithful fisherman, shepherd or peasant, is happier, if not more subtle, in recognising it.'<sup>3</sup> Citing St. Augustine's *De Trinitate* as his authority, Petrarch contended that without an understanding of immortality or faith, it was impossible to comprehend the *vera felicitas* and, by implication, also impossible to derive a true system of moral philosophy.<sup>4</sup> For Petrarch, as for St. Augustine, it was self-evident

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<sup>1</sup> Although Petrarch included the *Ethics* in his list of his favourite books, and his copy of the text is still extant (MS Paris Bibl. Nat. lat. 6458), it is unclear how fully Petrarch knew Aristotle. Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 117–37. On disagreement over Petrarch's knowledge of Aristotle, see, for example, de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme*, 2:147–52; Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 15–21.

<sup>2</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 49: 'credo hercle, nec dubito, illum non in rebus tantum parvis, quarum parvus et minime periculosus est error, sed in maximis et spectantibus ad salutis summam aberrasse tota, ut aiunt, via.'; Marsh, 264; cf. *Ps.* 119: 50–1.

<sup>3</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 49: 'audebo dicere . . . veram illum felicitatem sic penitus ignorasse, ut in eius cognitione, non dico subtilior, sed felicior fuerit vel quelibet anus pia, vel piscator pastore fidelis, vel agricola.' Marsh, 264; trans. Marsh, 265.

<sup>4</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 50; Marsh, 266; cf. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIII, viii, 11.

that the true happiness lay in the company of God in the life to come, and an acknowledgement of this fact was a necessary predicate of attaining to that happiness. Not having recognised the true identity of *felicitas*, and having sought a temporal form of happiness, Aristotle and other philosophers 'rejoiced over nothing, like people happy in their dreams', and were oblivious to the fact that, in confining themselves to the mortal, 'they were miserable'.<sup>5</sup> Only the 'thunderclap of imminent death would wake them to their misery.' For Petrarch, as for St. Augustine, *felicitas* could only be had in the eternal life to come, while the attempt to find happiness in mortal existence alone could lead to nothing but sorrow.

As Petrarch's critique of Aristotle in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* suggests, the opposition of mortality and immortality in relation to *felicitas* had deep implications for his understanding of the manner in which the true happiness could be attained. This question is examined in the first book of the *Africa*, in which Petrarch follows Macrobius in transforming Cicero's Stoical *Somnium Scipionis* into a Christianised exploration of the opposition of temporal satisfaction and the eternal life to come.<sup>6</sup> In place of Cicero's emphasis on the recognition of man's place in the concatenation of creation, Petrarch places the soul in opposition to the body, and presents the *vera felicitas* as the reward for a virtuous life devoted to the service of God.

At the beginning of the epic, the sleeping Scipio Africanus is visited by his dead father, Publius Cornelius, in a dream. In the exchange which follows, Publius attempts both to console Scipio's grief, and to inspire him in life. As in Petrarch's discussion with the deceased Laura in the *Triumphus mortis*,<sup>7</sup> Publius contrasts the true happiness of heaven with the travails of worldly existence. To earthly life come

Grief and groaning and a mind uncertain of the future  
And fear of death and the thousand most wretched cares  
Of our world, among which we spend the shadows

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<sup>5</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 51: 'Fingebant sibi ille et reliqui quod optabant, et quod naturaliter optant omnes, cuiusque optare potest nemo, felicitatem dico, quam verbis ornatam, absentem velut amicam canentes, non videbant, gaudebantque de nichilo, prorsus quasi somnio beati, vere autem miseri vicineque mortis tonitru ad miseriam excitandi, apertisque oculis conspecturi quenam esset illa felicitas, de qua somniando tractaverant.'; Marsh, 266.

<sup>6</sup> On the relationship between classical and Christian influences in Petrarch's rendition of the *Somnium Scipionis* in the *Africa*, see T. Visser, *Antike und Christentum in Petrarca's "Africa"* (Tübingen, 2005), 16–145, esp. 56, 60–1, 67–8, 70–5.

<sup>7</sup> *Triumphus mortis*, II, 37–9; text in *Rime*, 481–562, here 525.

The best times of our life and our finest years  
 [But] in *this* place [*i.e.* heaven] is undefiled day, which eternal light makes  
 fair,  
 Which neither consuming grief nor sorrowful murmurs disturb,  
 [And] which never burns with hate...<sup>8</sup>

True happiness, Petrarch argues, can be found only after death; and since the corporeal world is continually in flux, any attempt to find *felicitas* while on earth could lead only to grief.<sup>9</sup> But the recognition that 'life endures beyond the grave' and that no *felicitas* can be enjoyed during a mortal existence leads to the conclusion that moral life is a trial which must be endured.<sup>10</sup> If Scipio wishes to attain the immortal happiness he has been shown, the spirit of his dead uncle, Gnaeus Cornelius, tells him that he must merit this reward through the exercise of virtue. On the one hand, virtue is marked by religious devotion. 'A life adorned with virtue,' in which the breast is filled with piety, is, Scipio is told, 'assuredly the way to heaven.'<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the cultivation of virtue demands an acceptance of the inadequacy of a purely worldly existence. Developing an earlier point, Gnaeus Cornelius explains that a man who aspires to the *vera felicitas* must serve the soul while in this flesh.<sup>12</sup> Being of heavenly origin and desirous of happiness after death, the soul must not be allowed to become forgetful of its 'proper seat' through contact with the body.

In other works, the relationship between body and soul, between the mortal and the immortal, is manifested more clearly in the Christian opposition of *virtus* and *voluptas*. Virtue, the preserve of the soul, is juxtaposed with the pleasures of the flesh, and Petrarch frequently used allegory

<sup>8</sup> *Africa*, I, 214–21:

'Namque hactenus ire  
 Et dolor et gemitus et mens incerta futuri  
 Atque metus mortis mundique miserrima nostri  
 Milia curarum, rapide quibus optima vite  
 Tempora et in tenebris meliores ducimus annos:  
 Illic pura dies, quam lux eterna serenat,  
 Quam nec luctus edax nec tristia murmura turbant,  
 Non odia incendunt...'

<sup>9</sup> This underpins Petrarch's critique of Epicureanism. See, for example, *Fam.* II, 3, 4.

<sup>10</sup> *Africa*, I, 460–64; 465–67.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 483–89:

'Pietas sit pectoris hospes  
 Sancta tui morumque comes, que debita virtus  
 Magna patri, patrie maior, sed maxima summo  
 Ac perfecta Deo; quibus exornata profecto  
 Vita via in celum est, que vos huc tramite recto  
 Tunc revehat cum summa dies exemerit istud  
 Carnis onus pureque animam transmiserit aure.'

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 474–78.

to explain this pairing. Drawing on a long tradition of interpretation, he viewed the *Aeneid*, for example, as an epic allegory of the tension between *virtus* and *voluptas*. In a letter explaining the meaning of Virgil's epic written to Federico Arentino at some point between 1364 and 1367,<sup>13</sup> Petrarch argued that the wood in which Aeneas and his comrades found themselves after having been shipwrecked on the Carthaginian shore represents 'this life, filled with shadows and errors, confusing and unsure byways, inhabited by wild animals, that is, [beset] with many hidden trials and perils,'<sup>14</sup> and that the apparition of Venus stood for *voluptas*, which 'assumes a virginal countenance and bearing to deceive the ignorant,' but than which 'nothing passes more quickly'.<sup>15</sup> Troy itself was, as Craig Kallendorf has explained, an emblem of 'the debased life that Aeneas must leave behind so that "armed with virtue" . . . he sets out towards Italy through the uncertainties and instabilities of life . . . until the final battle with Turnus and the Latins, which marks the final victory of good over evil.'<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in the *Invective contra medicum*, Petrarch approvingly quoted Augustine's view that sensual desires inhibit the soul's progress towards virtue, and cited Virgil, *Aen.* II, 604–6 as an allegorical illustration of the same point.<sup>17</sup> Writing to Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro in January 1333, Petrarch expressed this same view as advice. Although no true happiness could be had in this life, it was nevertheless possible to approach the *vera felicitas* by steering clear of the bodily pleasures which obstruct his path. Forsaking riches, the applause of the vulgar mob, power, and pleasure for virtue, a man might shed his miseries and merit his reception into eternal bliss after death.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> On this letter, see, for example, C. Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas: Virgil and Epideictic Rhetoric in the Early Italian Renaissance* (Hanover and London, 1989), 28–30; E. Müller-Boachat, 'Allegorese und Allegorie: Zu Petrarcas Vergiledeutung (*Seniles* IV.5),' in *Petrarca 1304–1374: Beiträge zu Werk und Wirkung*, ed. F. Schalk (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1975), 198–208.

<sup>14</sup> *Sen.* IV, 5, 25: 'Silva vero vita hec, umbris atque erroribus plena perplexisque tramitibus atque incertis et feris habitata, hoc est difficultatibus et periculis multis atque occultis . . .' Referring to Virgil, *Aen.* I, 314.

<sup>15</sup> *Sen.* IV, 5, 26–7: 'Venus obvia silve medio ipsa est voluptas circa tempus vite medium ferventior atque acrior; os habitumque virgineum gerit ut illudat insciis; nam si quis eam qualis est cerneret, haud dubie visu solo tremefactus aufugeret; ut enim nichil blandius, sic nichil est fedius voluptate. Succincta autem quia velociter fugit et idcirco velocissimis comparatur . . .' Referring to Virgil, *Aen.* I, 314–5.

<sup>16</sup> Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas*, 28–9. See also Müller-Boachat, 'Allegorese und Allegorie,' 205–6.

<sup>17</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 175; Marsh, 148; quoting Augustine, *De vera religione*, III, iii (itself citing Plato, *Phaedro*, 80D–81E), and alluding to Virgil, *Aen.* II, 604–6.

<sup>18</sup> *Fam.* IV, 2, 6.

Despite his advice to Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro, however, the opposition of virtue and *voluptas* in relation to the *vera felicitas* was the source of great difficulty for Petrarch, and served as the subject for his most searching and personal moral analysis. The *Secretum*—or, more properly, the *De secreto conflictu curarum mearum*—constitutes an attempt to engage with the psychological tension between worldly desire and the longing for the *vera felicitas* which can be enjoyed only after death. Although some debate has surrounded the autobiographical accuracy and intended audience of the text,<sup>19</sup> the *Secretum* takes as its starting point at least a representation of Petrarch's moral dilemma, and offers an exploration of the means by which *voluptas* might be spurned and *virtus* embraced.

The *Secretum* begins with 'Franciscus' worrying about death and consumed with misery. Miraculously, Lady Truth appears and tells him that he is suffering from an improper affection for the pleasures of the world.<sup>20</sup> Urging him to look for true happiness in the eternal, she invites 'Augustinus' to guide him away from the temporal and to shake him free of his improper desires. In the three days of discussion which follow, Augustinus dissects Franciscus' affection for worldly delights and uncovers the nature of his unhappiness. He tells Franciscus that he is guilty—to one degree or another—of the seven deadly sins, but succumbed most frequently to the attractions of love and glory.<sup>21</sup> Being rooted in the mortal, these attractions bring Franciscus nothing but sorrow, and he is content to admit that it is the 'want, grief, ignominy, illness, death, and all such ills' of human life which causes him such anxiety.<sup>22</sup>

During the second day's discussion, however, Augustinus devotes particular attention to that 'deadly plague of the soul which the moderns call *accidia*, the ancients *egritudo*.'<sup>23</sup> It is a malady—best translated as 'spiritual sloth', 'melancholy', or even 'despair'—from which Franciscus has suffered for a considerable time, and, unlike his other sins, it is capable of paralysing him for days on end. It causes all things to seem hard, sorrowful,

<sup>19</sup> Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 185–206, 208–14; v. Kahn, 'The Figure of the Reader,' *PMLA* 100/2 (1985): 154–66; E. Loos, 'Die Hauptsünde der *acedia* in Dantes *Commedia* und Petrarca's *Secretum*,' in *Petrarca 1304–1374*, ed. Schalk, 156–83, here 172; Rico, *Vida u obra*, 32–3, 193–4.

<sup>20</sup> *Secretum*, proem; *Prose*, 22.

<sup>21</sup> *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 130–32.

<sup>22</sup> *Secretum*, I: '... qui non intelligat egestatem, dolores, ignominiam, denique morbos ac mortem aliaque huius generis...' *Prose*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> *Secretum*, II: 'Habet te funestra quedam pestis animi, quam accidiam moderni, veteres egritudinem dixerunt.' *Prose*, 106.

and horrendous, and it opens the way to desperation and destruction.<sup>24</sup> Explaining further, Franciscus reveals

that his grief comes not from any single blow of Fortune, but a concurrence of mishaps. It springs from the cumulative discouragement which the consideration of the miseries of the human condition, the memory of past hardships, and the fear of the future jointly produce.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to his persistent indulgence of other sins, especially the desire for love and glory, Franciscus is weighed down by his *accidia*, through which all things are made displeasing, and he is tied to the fickleness of others, and oppressed by the frailty of the body.<sup>26</sup>

As Siegfried Wenzel has shown, Franciscus' *accidia*, which is both the analogue and the culmination of his other sins, has a certain affinity with the Ciceronian and Senecan affect of *aegritudo*, but is nevertheless 'firmly based on the vice as it was defined and taught by scholastic theologians.'<sup>27</sup> Bound up with the opposition of *virtus* and *voluptas*, and of *felicitas* and *fortuna*, it generated what St. Thomas Aquinas described as a '*tristia de spirituali bono*'<sup>28</sup> and what Hugh of St. Victor understood as an '*ex confusione mentis nata tristia, sive taedium et amaritudo animi immoderata, qua iucunditas spiritualis extinguitur*.'<sup>29</sup> The *accidia* from which Franciscus suffered, as David of Augsburg put it, 'inclines to despair, diffidence, and suspicions, and sometimes drives its victim to suicide when he is oppressed by unreasonable grief.'<sup>30</sup> At the same time, it 'is a very subjective lament at lack of means, lack of full personal independence,'<sup>31</sup> although, like love and the desire for glory, it too is associated with the immoderate love for the mortal world, and stands at the core of the problem of how *virtus* is to be embraced and the *vera felicitas* merited.

<sup>24</sup> *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 106.

<sup>25</sup> S. Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Chapel Hill NC, 1967), 157.

<sup>26</sup> *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 116–18.

<sup>27</sup> S. Wenzel, 'Petrarch's *accidia*,' *Studies in the Renaissance* 8 (1961): 36–48, here 47; see also Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 162.

<sup>28</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 35; *De malo*, q. 11, quoted at Wenzel, 'Petrarch's *accidia*,' 41.

<sup>29</sup> Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacram.* III, 13, 1; quoted at Wenzel, 'Petrarch's *accidia*,' 45.

<sup>30</sup> David of Augsburg, *Formula novitorum*, 51; quoted at Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 160.

<sup>31</sup> Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 162.

## 2. *The Problem of the Secretum*

The *Secretum* was intended to address the misery from which Franciscus suffered.<sup>32</sup> Taking as its starting point the fact that he was made unhappy by the instability and uncertainty of the world, and further consumed with spiritual sloth and melancholy, it set out to provide a blueprint for the moral behaviour which was necessary for him to embrace virtue and merit the *vera felicitas*. In the proem, Lady Truth returns to the two poles of Petrarch's moral topography, and tells Franciscus that he must turn his gaze from the mortal to the eternal.<sup>33</sup> Although this is a perfectly succinct summary of the change which it was necessary for Franciscus to make, however, it is a far from complete prognosis. As Lady Truth turns to Augustinus for assistance, it is evident from Franciscus' apparent lack of understanding that a fuller analysis of his moral condition is necessary.<sup>34</sup> If he is to turn from the mortal to the eternal as Lady Truth has suggested, the underlying reason for Franciscus' attachment to *voluptas* must be uncovered before Augustinus can offer a detailed explanation of the means by which virtue might be apprehended.

Despite its importance to an understanding of Petrarch's conception of virtue, the *Secretum* is nevertheless a highly problematic text, and has frequently been viewed as a confused work composed during a period of profound personal and intellectual change. This confusion has been interpreted in a variety of different ways, and is frequently related to the question of dating, but in each case, Petrarch is presented as having failed to offer a fully coherent solution to Franciscus' misery because of his changing attitudes towards contrasting philosophical traditions. For Carlo Calcaterra, for example, the *Secretum* was the product of a period of religious 'crisis' in the period 1342–3, in which the classical and humanistic enthusiasms of his youth were replaced with more overtly Christian concerns.<sup>35</sup> The 'confusion' of the *Secretum* is, however, most commonly described in terms of the use of incompatible elements of Stoic philosophy—recovered primarily from Cicero and Seneca—and the fideism

<sup>32</sup> Note the alternative, although unconvincing, reading offered in Kahn, 'The Figure of the Reader,' 155.

<sup>33</sup> *Secretum*, proem; *Prose*, 22.

<sup>34</sup> *Secretum*, proem; *Prose*, 24.

<sup>35</sup> Calcaterra, 'La concezione storica del Petrarca'; idem, *Nella selva del Petrarca*, 1–18; 418ff; see also Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, 25, 41; A. S. Bernardo, *Petrarch, Laura and the Triumphs* (Albany, 1974), 6–8; U. Bosco, 'Gli studi di Carlo Calcaterra sul Petrarca,' *Studi petrarcheschi* 5 (1952): 5–13, esp. 10–11.



of St. Augustine's later writings. Although the issue of chronology is not considered closely, the idea of a 'crisis', in which Petrarch moved from Christian to classical sources of inspiration (rather than from the latter to the former, as Calcaterra argued), is emphasised in the works of Klaus Heitmann, Charles Trinkaus, and William Bouwsma, and apparently 'Stoical' moments are contrasted vividly with 'Augustinian' passages which are thought to exemplify 'medieval' conceptions of sin and the importance of faith and grace.<sup>36</sup> Both Heitmann and Trinkaus note that Petrarch not only seems to make Augustinus stress the limitations of man's ability to attain to virtue without divine aid, but also, and somewhat puzzlingly, appears to put the Stoic doctrine of the will into the mouth of Franciscus' guide; for Heitmann, this is an indication that, having moved closer towards classical sources, Petrarch simply forgot the details of St. Augustine's fideistic theology, while for Trinkaus, it demonstrates that, in oscillating between different traditions for purely rhetorical reasons,

Petrarch did not so much forget as disregard the niceties of doctrine which to him were less important than the dynamic life situations of individual men struggling for their salvation in a world where human existence itself dictated the variety of doctrinal positions, philosophic and religious.<sup>37</sup>

The contention that the *Secretum* is a work which suffers from the eclectic use of discordant traditions has, however, been given particular credence by the efforts made by Francisco Rico and Hans Baron to reconsider the date of its composition.<sup>38</sup> Although their approaches differ in a number of respects, particularly with respect to the identification of textual parallels and autobiographical details, Rico and Baron both recognised the limitations imposed by the absence of earlier manuscript drafts, and thus endeavoured to uncover compositional layers in the text by identifying variations of style and argumentation. Particularly sensitive to supposed contradictions between Petrarch's use of specific sources, they saw the ambient tone of the text as reflective of an early enthusiasm for St. Augustine's *De vera religione* (which is viewed as a repository of fideistic thought), and identified two clearly-defined passages in the first book as being reflec-

<sup>36</sup> Heitmann, *Fortuna und Virtus*, *passim*; Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 1:17ff; idem, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 27–51; Bouwsma, 'The Two Faces of Renaissance Humanism'.

<sup>37</sup> Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 1:14.

<sup>38</sup> Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*; Rico, *Vida u obra*. Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum* represents a significant shift away from his earlier position and should be read alongside Baron, 'Petrarch's *Secretum*: Was It Revised—and Why?', reprinted in a revised form in Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, 51–101.



tive of uniquely 'Stoic' views.<sup>39</sup> Using the *Familiare*s and the *Canzoniere* as a point of comparison, it was suggested that these two passages were inserted into the original 1347 draft under the influence of Cicero's letters and treatises in around 1353, by which time the *De vera religione* was held to have lost its appeal.<sup>40</sup> In contrast to a broadly 'Augustinian' view of the attainment of virtue—involving a *meditatio mortis*—Baron and Rico believed that these passages presented Franciscus' 'conflict of cares' as a 'perturbation of mind' which could be overcome through the development of a 'correct will' and the application of reason in the pursuit of self-knowledge.<sup>41</sup>

The revised dating proposed by Rico and Baron has not met with universal approval and many reviewers expressed concern about the validity of assigning the text to a later period on the basis of parallels drawn with works which are themselves difficult—if not impossible—to date.<sup>42</sup> Viewing the chronology of Petrarch's intellectual development rather differently, Enrico Fenzi, Bortolo Martinelli, and Giovanni Ponte offered a staunch defence of the dating of the *Secretum* to 1342–3 and rejected a number of the biographical claims intrinsic to Baron and Rico's case.<sup>43</sup> Despite disagreement over the dating of the text, however, the underlying methodology of both those who advocate the 1347–53 dating and the 1342–3 dating remains identical.<sup>44</sup> Critics and supporters of Baron and Rico

<sup>39</sup> Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 19–46; Rico, *Vida u obra*, 456–79.

<sup>40</sup> Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 202–8; Rico, *Vida u obra*, 113–4; Rico, 'Petrarca y el *De vera religione*,' esp. 350–52.

<sup>41</sup> See Baron's helpful summary of this position; Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 45–6.

<sup>42</sup> On Rico, *Vida u obra*, see reviews by F. Bruni, *Medioevo romanzo* 3 (1976): 144–52; G. Martellotti, *Annali della Scuola Normale di Pisa*, Classe di lettere e filosofia, 3rd ser. 6/4 (1976): 1394–1401; D. Phillips, *Italica* 54/2 (Summer 1977): 300–6; G. Ponte, *Rassegna della letteratura italiana* 81 (1977): 442–5; A. D. Scaglione, *Romance Philology* 30 (1977–8): 116–9; K. Foster, *Modern Language Review* 73 (1978): 442–4. On Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, see reviews by F. E. Cranz, *Renaissance Quarterly* 39/4 (Winter 1986): 731–2; U. Dotti, *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 164 (1987): 120–5; G. Holmes, *English Historical Review* 103 (1988): 480–1; N. Mann, *Modern Language Review* 83 (1988): 751–2; B. Martinelli, *Speculum* 62/3 (July 1987): 644–8; M. Palumbo, *Medioevo romanzo* 11 (1986): 456–61; C. Trinkaus, *AHR* 91 (June 1986): 695–6.

<sup>43</sup> E. Fenzi, 'Dall' *Africa* al *Secretum*', in *Il Petrarca ad Arquà. Atti del Convegno di Studi nel VI Centenario (1370–1374)*, ed. G. Billanovich and G. Frasso (Padua, 1975), 61–115; Martinelli, *Il "Secretum" conteso*; idem, 'Sulla data del *Secretum* del Petrarca: Nova et vetera,' *Critica letteraria* 13 (1985): 431–82, 645–93; G. Ponte, 'Nella selva del Petrarca: La discussa data del *Secretum*,' *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 167 (1990): 1–63. Note also Rico, 'Sobre la cronología del *Secretum*'.

<sup>44</sup> C. Kallendorf, 'The Historical Petrarch,' *AHR* 101/1 (Feb. 1996): 130–41, here 137–8; Trinkaus, Review of *Petrarch's Secretum*, 696.

alike appear not to dispute that the text displays some evidence of 'Stoical' and 'Augustinian' moments in tension, and the problem of identifying the date of Petrarch's transition from one mode of thought to another partly fuels the continuing debate over its composition.

That the *Secretum* appears to comprise a rather puzzling melange of discordant intellectual positions has been accepted even by those recent studies which have attempted to detect a degree of consistency in the humanistic practices which underpinned the dialogue. Victoria Kahn and Carol Quillen have dismissed the suggestion made by Heitmann and Trinkaus that Petrarch simply 'got Augustine wrong', and have instead attempted to argue that he deliberately employed a literary representation of St. Augustine to validate both the fideistic appeals to faith and grace, and the stoical invocations of the will which Baron and Rico identified in the text.<sup>45</sup> For Quillen, the *Secretum* is best viewed as 'an appropriation of Augustine's authority for an exploration of the specifically humanistic project of reviving and emulating the literary and cultural standards of antiquity.'<sup>46</sup> Neither Kahn nor Quillen seem to disagree that the *Secretum* was a patchwork quilt of 'Stoic' and 'Augustinian' positions, but each contends that Petrarch's invocation of St. Augustine authorised his inconsistency.

Although the contention that the *Secretum* was a confused work expressing positions drawn from contrasting philosophical traditions has stimulated much important research, and has contributed to the enrichment of our understanding of Petrarch's humanistic practices, such a reading is nevertheless based on two assumptions, both of which are manifestations of the 'question of attribution' discussed in the previous chapter. On the one hand, those who have seen the *Secretum* as an inconsistent work have been inclined to believe that the frequent allusions to Stoic philosophy betray a genuine intellectual affinity with that school of thought. Those occasions on which the figure of Augustinus invokes the name of Stoicism or quotes directly from Cicero, for example, have commonly been viewed as examples of Petrarch transforming the character into a sincerely Stoic sage. On the other hand, the identification of 'Augustinian' moments in the text has rested not only on a tendency to view St. Augustine's theology as a monolithic body of fideistic thought, but also on the belief that

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<sup>45</sup> Kahn, 'The Figure of the Reader'; Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 182–216, esp. 187–90.

<sup>46</sup> Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 190.

his theology stood in stark contrast to the voluntarism and rationalism of Academic Stoicism. Those early works of St. Augustine's which were known to Petrarch—such as the *De vera religione*—have either been neglected entirely, or have been viewed in a manner which ignores their indebtedness to Stoic philosophy.

As we have noted in the previous chapter, however, it is legitimate to call each of these assumptions into question, and to look more closely at those passages which have been viewed by scholars such as Baron and Rico as most distinctive of Stoic thought. Instead of there being a breach between Petrarch's use of classical and patristic texts, his familiarity with Augustine's earlier works—particularly the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*—would have permitted a much more flexible and dynamic approach towards the relationship between the two schools of thought. Viewed not as representative of a monolithic body of theology in tension with ancient philosophy, but as a bridge between Stoicism and classical literature on the one hand, and Christian Neo-Platonism on the other hand, the *Soliloquies* and the *De vera religione* offered Petrarch the opportunity to marry a positive view of human reason with faith and grace, while allowing him a relatively free literary rein. Recognising that St. Augustine had been an avid reader of Cicero, and approving of the Christian moral theology which developed out of that reading, Petrarch had a precedent for the selective use of classical texts in the *Secretum*. Where the close relationship between Augustine's early theology and Academic Stoicism is acknowledged, those elements of the text which appear most redolent of classical philosophy may be viewed less as indications of Petrarch's intellectual affinity with the Stoics and more as reflections of his capacity to explore the fertile lands which connected Cicero and Seneca with St. Augustine. Had Petrarch had the *Soliloquies* and the *De vera religione* in mind while composing the *Secretum*, it would have been perfectly legitimate for him to have mined Cicero's dialogues and Seneca's letters—for example—for gnomic quotations and ancillary support while remaining true to the spirit of St. Augustine's early moral theology. Indeed, I propose to demonstrate that when the 'question of attribution' is taken into account, and supposedly 'Stoical' moments are read more critically alongside works such as the *Soliloquies* and the *De vera religione*, the *Secretum* can be read more convincingly as a conscious attempt to reprise St. Augustine's early theology than as a composite of contrasting viewpoints drawn from classical philosophy and the saint's later, more fideistic works.

### 3. *Understanding Franciscus' 'Illness': Voluntas, Cognition, and the Meditatio Mortis*

The first of Rico and Baron's 'Stoical' passages occurs at the beginning of the first book of the *Secretum*. As we have already seen, in attempting to guide Franciscus away from his misery and towards virtue, Augustinus' first task was to uncover the underlying psychological reason for his slothful attachment to the temporal. Having been introduced by Lady Truth, Augustinus begins somewhat obliquely by asking Franciscus whether he has forgotten the fact of his own mortality, for, he explains,

nothing may be found more efficacious for spurning the allurements of this life and for composing the mind among the innumerable tempests of the world than a recollection of one's misery and a constant contemplation of death.<sup>47</sup>

Although Franciscus claims never to forget his mortality, Augustinus doubts his sincerity and suspects that he is one of the many who persist in deceiving themselves and insist on ignoring the perils to which they are exposed. The role of the will is central to the development of this line of argument. Using the analogy of sickness and health, Augustinus shows that if a person recognises his unhappiness, he would naturally wish to rid himself of that misery. As a result of this desire, he would earnestly strive to shed his unhappiness and, as a consequence of this effort, would inevitably have his wish satisfied.<sup>48</sup> Although Franciscus agrees that a man who had recognised his unhappiness would want to be happy, he objects that many people are nevertheless unhappy against their will. Augustinus corrects him and states that since only virtue can make a man happy, it follows that only vice can make a man unhappy.<sup>49</sup> As Franciscus allows himself to be persuaded, the conversation turns once again to the *meditatio mortis*.<sup>50</sup>

In his study of the *Secretum*, Baron followed Rico in suggesting that the manner in which Petrarch handled the 'desire to be happy' was reflective of an absorption of the Stoic doctrine of the will.<sup>51</sup> As Bouwsma, Trinkaus,

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<sup>47</sup> *Secretum*, I: '...cum sit profecto verissimum ad contemnendas vite huius illecebras componendumque inter tot mundi procellas animum nichil efficacius reperiri quam memoriam proprie miserie et meditationem mortis assiduam...'; *Prose*, 28.

<sup>48</sup> *Secretum*, I; *Prose*, 28–30.

<sup>49</sup> *Secretum*, I; *Prose*, 30.

<sup>50</sup> *Secretum*, I; *Prose*, 34.

<sup>51</sup> Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 41; Rico, *Vida u obra*, 459.

and Foster have argued, in stating that no man can be unhappy against his will, Augustinus appears to present Franciscus' attachment to the world as a 'perturbation of the mind', evoking the Stoicism which Petrarch would have encountered through Cicero and Seneca.<sup>52</sup> As such, the treatment of *voluntas* does not appear to fit comfortably with the surrounding instances of the Christian and 'medieval' *meditatio mortis* theme, and could best be explained as a later insertion into the text.

This interpretation is certainly not unconvincing. On the one hand, Petrarch's treatment of *voluntas* does indeed seem to be at variance with the view of the will which St. Augustine expressed in his later works.<sup>53</sup> Although Augustine was deeply concerned not to deny the will a role, he insisted that grace was essential to the operation of *voluntas* in his anti-Pelagian tracts. In the *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, for example, Augustine affirmed that '[w]hen he begins, God operates [in us] that we might will, and he co-operates with those who are willing when he perfects [us]... And so he operates without us that we might will; but when we will, and will in such a way that we act, he co-operates with us.'<sup>54</sup> The autonomy which Petrarch's passage seems to grant the human will is absent from St. Augustine's mature, anti-Pelagian writings.

On the other hand, Petrarch was well acquainted with several sources which describe the Stoic doctrine of the will and which would have been attractive texts for emulation. In the *Tusculan Disputations* and the *De finibus*, for example, Cicero outlined the Stoic view that happiness could only come from virtue<sup>55</sup> and affirmed that virtue could only be attained by consenting to the good and by withholding consent from the bad.<sup>56</sup> In his letters, Seneca frequently wrote that it was incorrect to believe that corporeal pleasures were good and similarly incorrect to believe that physical suffering was bad.<sup>57</sup> A correctly ordered soul declined to consent to these

<sup>52</sup> Bouwsma, 'The Two Faces of Renaissance Humanism,' 30; Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 1:7; K. Foster, *Petrarch. Poet and Humanist* (Edinburgh, 1984), 165.

<sup>53</sup> There is considerable debate surrounding St. Augustine's view of the will, in no small part due to apparent shifts in his attitude. For a useful summary, see E. Stump, 'Augustine on Free Will,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Stump and Kretzmann, 124–47, esp. 124–26.

<sup>54</sup> Augustine, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, XVII, 33; quoted at Stump, 'Augustine on Free Will,' 137.

<sup>55</sup> E.g. Cicero, *Tusc.* V, xii, 35–6; cf. Seneca, *Ep.* xcii.

<sup>56</sup> E.g. Cicero, *Tusc.* II, xiii, 30–3; cf. Seneca, *Ep.* lxvi.

<sup>57</sup> E.g. Seneca, *Epp.* lix, lxxi, lxxx.

errant beliefs and instead consented to temperance in the face of pleasure, or fortitude in the face of pain.<sup>58</sup>

From our present perspective, Cicero illustrates this point particularly well in his critique of Torquatus' Epicurean belief that pain and pleasure corresponded to happiness and misery in the *De finibus*. Here, Cicero considers Epicurus' statement that, were he being burnt to death, he would exclaim 'How delightful this is!' In denying the existence of his physical suffering, Epicurus is presented as having believed that he would overcome the possibility of unhappiness.<sup>59</sup> Cicero, however, contends that in refusing to recognise the existence of the flames, Epicurus would not have avoided misery at all. The distress of being burnt, he explained, does not lie in the pain of the fire itself, but in the willingness to consent to the urge to give in to the effects of the flames, and the refusal to turn to courage.<sup>60</sup> Here, it is the will which determines whether a man submits himself to the effects of certain stimuli or allows himself to assume the mantle of the good.

Having encountered these views, it would not have been implausible for Petrarch to have inserted them into a later draft of the *Secretum*. Had Petrarch indeed drawn inspiration from Stoic thought, we should read the opening pages of the dialogue as an explanation of Franciscus' need to develop a 'correct will'. Since he submits himself willingly to earthly experiences—and, as Seneca explained, thereby willingly made himself susceptible to the whim of fortune<sup>61</sup>—he must, if he desires happiness, decline to consent to the effects of an unstable world and will only the good. Read in this way, the passage would seem to outline a reasonable remedy for Franciscus' condition, but would stand in contrast to the *meditatio mortis* theme. Although Cicero, quoting Plato, declared that the life of the philosopher is a preparation for death,<sup>62</sup> the emphasis on the corruptibility of the body integral to Petrarch's treatment of the *meditatio mortis* is entirely absent.<sup>63</sup>

Although a 'Stoical' reading of this passage is not unreasonable, however, it is not a completely satisfying interpretation. As well as relying on

<sup>58</sup> E.g. Cicero, *Tusc.* IV, xxxviii, 83; also III, xvii, 36.

<sup>59</sup> Cicero, *De finibus*, II, xxvii, 88–9; see M. C. Stokes, 'Cicero on Epicurean Pleasures', in *Cicero the Philosopher: Twelve Papers*, ed. J. G. F. Powell (Oxford, 1995), 145–70.

<sup>60</sup> Cicero, *De finibus*, II, xxix, 94–5.

<sup>61</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* lxxiv, 2–4.

<sup>62</sup> Cicero, *Tusc.* I, xxx, 74, quoting Plato, *Phaedo*, 67D.

<sup>63</sup> *Secretum*, I; *Prose*, 54–8.

a poor view of Petrarch's compositional skills, such a reading seems to fit uneasily with a close examination of Augustinus' actual words. Discussing Franciscus' appreciation of his misery, he asks whether anyone 'has so lost track of sense that, having been gripped by a deadly illness, he would not ardently desire health.'<sup>64</sup> Franciscus agrees that no-one who was really sick would not desire health, and this prompts Augustinus to ask a further question. 'Do you think,' he presses, 'that there is anyone so lazy and remiss of spirit that he would not strive with all his zeal after that which he desired with all his mind?'<sup>65</sup> Franciscus agrees that there is no-one so indolent. Augustinus then leads him to a crucial conclusion:

Just as someone who comes to recognise that he is miserable from deep and intense meditation desires not to be miserable, and as someone who has begun to hope for this strives for it, so he who has striven for this is also able to achieve it. For it is clear that the third of these can only be impeded by a defect in the second, just as the second can be impeded only by a defect in the first; so it is correct that the root of human well-being is in the first.<sup>66</sup>

Whereas Baron, Rico and others have interpreted this as a statement of the importance of the 'desire not to be miserable', Augustinus clearly indicates that Franciscus' error is not one of will, but of cognition. Since he does not recognise his illness, he cannot desire to be well or strive for health and hence cannot rid himself of his sickness. A few paragraphs later, Augustinus revisits the same point and asks Franciscus whether he recalls 'that a perfect understanding of our own miseries produces a perfect longing to rise from them.'<sup>67</sup> Explaining further, he states that Franciscus never really wanted to be happy because his mind remained unmoved.<sup>68</sup> This stands in stark contrast to the form of Academic Stoicism propounded by Cicero and Seneca. Omitting to propose any necessary connection between

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<sup>64</sup> *Secretum*, I: 'Putas ne quempiam adeo delirare, ut morbo ancipiti correptus non summe cupiat sanitatem?'; *Prose*, 28.

<sup>65</sup> *Secretum*, I: 'Putas ne quempiam fore tam pigri remissique animi ut non, quod tota mente desiderat, omni studio consecetur?'; *Prose*, 28.

<sup>66</sup> *Secretum*, I: 'Ut, sicut qui se miserum alta et fixa meditatione cognoverit cupiat esse non miser, et qui id optare ceperit sectetur, sic et qui id sectatus fuerit, possit etiam adipisci. Enimvero tertium huiusmodi sicut nonnisi ex secundi, sic secundum nonnisi ex primi defectu prepediri posse compertum est; ita primum illud ceu radix humane salutis subsistat oportet.'; *Prose*, 28–30.

<sup>67</sup> *Secretum*, I: 'Recognoscis ne igitur veram illam fuisse sententiam grandevumque progressum, ut miseriarum suarum perfecta cognitio perfectum desiderium pariat assurgendi? Desiderium potentia consequitur.'; *Prose*, 42–44.

<sup>68</sup> *Secretum*, I, quoting Virgil, *Aen.* IV, 449; *Prose*, 42. Compare the similar use of the same quotation in the context of a rejection of Stoic ethics at Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, IX, 4.



cognition and will, Cicero and Seneca leave open the possibility that a person could recognise the cause of his misery and yet decline to consent to the virtue which he knew would lead to happiness.

If it is unlikely for this passage to have been the outcome of an absorption of Stoic ethics, other texts present themselves as plausible sources. The first pages of the *Secretum* seem to have many parallels with the opening of Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae* and Augustine's *Soliloquies*, and—in addition to their apparently autobiographical nature—these texts appear to recall the appearance of Lady Truth, the nature of Franciscus' illness and Augustinus' diagnosis of his error in Petrarch's dialogue. In the *Soliloquies*, the character Augustinus has been thinking about the nature of the good in solitude for some time when the mysterious figure of Ratio appears to him.<sup>69</sup> Under questioning, Augustinus admits that he is disturbed by 'the fear of loss of those I love, the fear of suffering and the fear of death.'<sup>70</sup> Using a form of dialogue quite different from that employed by Cicero, but similar to that in the *Secretum*, Ratio points out that Augustinus' sadness is the result of his being unduly attached to the world,<sup>71</sup> and proceeds to guide his soul toward God through cognitive change. In the *De consolazione philosophiae*, which may have been partly modelled on the *Soliloquies*,<sup>72</sup> Boethius' character is again sitting alone meditating in a glade when Lady Philosophy appears and attempts to dispel his misery.<sup>73</sup> As in the *Soliloquies*, Boethius' 'vision is clouded by mortal shadows, he is held fast by earthly longings, and he is tossed by passion.'<sup>74</sup> Lady Philosophy consoles him and endeavours to free him from the assaults of fortune.

It is, however, Augustine's early, introspective works—the *Soliloquies* and the *De vera religione*—which, as conscious adaptations of Stoic thought, recommend themselves most strongly as potential sources for Petrarch's argument in the first pages of the *Secretum*.<sup>75</sup> From his read-

<sup>69</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, i, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., I, ix, 19: 'Sed modo video mihi tribus tantum rebus posse conmoeri: metu amissionis eorum hominum quos diligo, metu doloris, metu mortis.'

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., I, x, 17ff.

<sup>72</sup> E. T. Silk, 'Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae* as a Sequel to Augustine's *Dialogues* and *Soliloquia*,' *Harvard Theological Review* 32/1 (1939): 19–39.

<sup>73</sup> Boethius, *De cons. phil.*, I pr 1.

<sup>74</sup> Silk, 'Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae* as a Sequel,' 36.

<sup>75</sup> Although the reference is somewhat fleeting, it is tempting to suggest that Petrarch wished to present Franciscus as repeating St. Augustine's own solitary struggles. *Secretum*, proem.: '...et, nisi te praesens forte felicitas miseriarum tuarum fecit immemorem, multa tu, dum corporeo carcere clauderis, huic similia pertulisti.' *Prose*, 24. For a very



ing of the *De vera religione*, Petrarch was well acquainted with Augustine's approbation of the Stoic view that happiness could only come from virtue,<sup>76</sup> and with his affirmation that virtue and vice were the result of will.<sup>77</sup> In contrast to the Stoics, however, St. Augustine viewed *voluntas* not as a variety of consent, but as a form of orientation that was rooted in cognition. Virtue was, indeed, a matter of *voluntas*, but only in that virtue was the outcome of an orientation of the self towards God. By the same token, sin was the outcome of an orientation towards the world.<sup>78</sup>

In the *De vera religione*, St. Augustine explained that a man could turn his orientation towards God by coming to understand the truth about God and the soul.<sup>79</sup> From Scripture, he argued, it is evident that God provided the human soul with the capacity to redeem itself and to merit a blessed life after death.<sup>80</sup> Although a full comprehension of this truth would lead a man to love God and the good, his understanding could be impeded by a reliance on the senses.<sup>81</sup> In the *Soliloquies*, this question was examined from the perspective of a philosophical enquiry into the nature of *veritas* and reveals a critical reliance on the distinction between the mortal and the eternal.<sup>82</sup>

Having explained that he would like to know about God and the good, Augustinus is told that since he is seeking the truth, he must first understand what the word 'truth' itself connotes if he is ever to desire it.<sup>83</sup> In this, Ratio distinguishes between 'truth' and 'true'. The nature of a corporeal

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brief discussion of Petrarch's knowledge of the *Soliloquies*, although not with reference to the *Secretum*, see Gerosa, *Umanesimo cristiano del Petrarca*, 101–2. The potential parallel between the *Secretum* and the *Soliloquies* is also discussed in Tateo, *Dialogo interiore e polemica ideologica nel "Secretum"*.

<sup>76</sup> Augustine, *De vera religione*, xxiii, 44.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., xiv, 27; cf. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, I, xiii, 96; *De civ. Dei*, IX, 4; XI, 17.

<sup>78</sup> Even in later years, Augustine persisted in this view, expressing orientation most frequently as love of self or love of God. Indeed, the idea of orientation ultimately provided the foundation for Augustine's notion of the 'two cities'. See, for example, Bonner, *St. Augustine*, 312–93; G. Bonner, 'Augustine and Pelagianism,' *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 33–51 and 24 (1993): 27–47; J. Wetzel, 'Snares of the Truth: Augustine on Free Will and Predestination', in *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner*, ed. R. Dodaro and G. Lawless (London, 2002), 124–41.

<sup>79</sup> Augustine, *De vera religione*, xxiv, 45.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., xiv, 27–xvii, 34.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., xxxii, 59–xxxiv, 64.

<sup>82</sup> It is worth noting that Augustine wrote the *Soliloquies* to counter the scepticism of the New Academy, on which see, for example, G. O'Daly, 'The response to scepticism and the mechanisms of cognition,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Stump and Kretzmann, 159–70.

<sup>83</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, xv, 27.

object can be described as 'true' in that one can speak of a 'true' tree.<sup>84</sup> This quality of being true is, however, bound up with existence and terminates with death. Yet in order to speak of 'truth' as something which exists in itself, it must exist distinct from the existence of corporeal things. As Ratio explains, 'truth' persists after the death of a true corporeality in the same way that chastity exists after a chaste person dies.<sup>85</sup> Consequently,

Truth is therefore not in mortal things. Truth does, however, exist and is somewhere. There are, therefore, immortal things. Nothing however is true in which there is no truth. It follows that only immortal things are true.<sup>86</sup>

The argument is somewhat abstract, but the syllogism is relatively simple. The truth which Augustinus is searching for is absolute and eternal. Nothing of this absolute truth could be found in mortal things whose existence is fleeting. Since anything that is not the truth is false, all mortal things are falsehoods. The implication is clear. If a man wished to change his orientation by coming to know the truth about God and the soul, he must first come to realise that the truth he seeks cannot be found in the mortal. Any mortal pleasure must be avoided in the pursuit of *veritas*. He must recognise that anything that will die is the antithesis of everything he seeks. The allurements of the physical world perceptible to the body must therefore be spurned as the first step in the pursuit of truth.<sup>87</sup> Truth, as Ratio goes on to explain, can be found only within the immortal soul itself.

Had Petrarch drawn inspiration from the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*, a quite different interpretation of our passage emerges. Where Franciscus' condition is viewed as a crisis of orientation, Augustinus' contention that no-one is unhappy against his will serves to highlight the fact that Franciscus does not recognise his 'illness'. If, as he claimed after the initial statement of the *meditatio mortis*, Franciscus really did meditate on death, he would know that true happiness could only be found in the eternal and would as a consequence aspire to virtue and desire the *vera felicitas*. Augustinus' connection of will and happiness illustrates that Franciscus cannot fully understand the implications of human mortality. This digression, stimulated by Franciscus' self-deception, is a necessary development of the initial statement of the *meditatio mortis* and logically

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., I, xv, 28.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., I, xv, 29: 'Non igitur est veritas in rebus mortalibus. Est autem veritas et non est nusquam. Sunt igitur res immortales. Nihil autem verum, in quo veritas non est. Conficitur non esse vera nisi quae sunt immortalia.'

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., I, xiv, 24.

leads on to a more detailed explanation of the same theme. In the same way as in the *De vera religione* the desire for happiness is bound up with a recognition of the fallacy of looking to the mortal world. A reading of this passage which views Petrarch's apparent classicising tendencies as part of a strategy derived from St. Augustine's early, introspective works, therefore, gives weight to the reference to 'recognition' that is ignored in a 'Stoical' reading, and allows the discussion of *voluntas* to be viewed as a logical continuation of Petrarch's engagement with the *meditatio mortis* theme.

#### 4. *Parallels: the World, the Truth, and Voluntas in the Invectives*

Although it is possible to read Rico and Baron's first 'Stoical' passage as a treatment of the role of cognition in moral reorientation in imitation of the early, introspective works of St. Augustine, one of Petrarch's most frequently quoted texts has been used to suggest it was the will, and not the mind which was of primary significance, and that his attachment to this particular element of Stoic philosophy was both strong and enduring. In the fourth book of the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, Petrarch attempted to rebut the Aristotelian claims of his Venetian friends by using Aristotle's own philosophy. Petrarch begins by affirming that Aristotle failed to achieve his own objective. 'I have often complained to myself and with others,' he wrote,

that what is announced by the philosopher in the first book of the *Ethics* is not fulfilled, that is to say that we study this branch of philosophy not so that we may know, but so that we may become good.<sup>88</sup>

Petrarch does not deny that Aristotle defines the good admirably, but he points out that the knowledge that the philosopher imparts does not 'urge the mind towards love of virtue and hatred of vice.'<sup>89</sup> It is, after all, one

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<sup>88</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 107: 'Et sepe mecum et quandoque cum aliis questus sum illud rebus non impleri, quod in primo Ethicorum philosophus idem ipse prefatus est, eam scilicet philosophie partem disci, non ut sciamus, sed ut boni fiamus.'; Marsh, 314.

<sup>89</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 107–8: 'Video nempe virtutem ab illo egregie diffiniri et distingui tractarique acriter, et que cuique sunt propria, seu vitio, seu virtuti . . . Docet ille, non infitior, quid est virtus; at stimulos ac verborum faces, quibus ad amorem virtutis vitique odium mens urgetur atque incenditur, lectio illa vel non habet, vel paucissimos habet.'; Marsh, 314.

thing to know and another one to love or to will,<sup>90</sup> 'but it is preferable [*satius*] to will the good than to know the truth.'<sup>91</sup>

This passage can be examined from a variety of different perspectives and there will be cause to return to its implications in a later chapter, but for scholars such as Trinkaus and Seigel, Petrarch appears to criticise Aristotle's approach to moral philosophy because it lacks the stirring exhortations and grand style that would otherwise inspire the reader to love and will the good.<sup>92</sup> Seeing rhetoric as intimately related to the will, Trinkaus reads the assertion '*Satius est autem bonum velle quam verum nosse*' as an affirmation of the primacy of *voluntas* in determining virtue.<sup>93</sup>

Although the passage may seem to imply that Aristotle's failure is rhetorical, Petrarch's objection is actually related to the ends for which knowledge is sought. If knowledge of the good is sought for its own sake, Petrarch suggests, its value is limited. It is only where this knowledge is sought for the sake of loving the good that it becomes worthwhile. 'What is the use,' he asks, 'of knowing what virtue is, if that knowledge does not make us love it?'<sup>94</sup> Aristotle's error lay in pursuing knowledge without understanding its proper end, not merely in explaining the nature of the good inadequately.

The importance of distinguishing between knowledge for its own sake and knowledge for the sake of loving the good is explained in greater detail in the following paragraphs. 'Those who spend their time,' Petrarch writes a little later,

in knowing virtue rather than attaining it err greatly, and [those who spend their time] in learning about rather than in loving God err most of all. For while it is possible for no-one to know God entirely in this life, it is possible to love Him piously and ardently ...<sup>95</sup>

While this appears to reprise Academic Scepticism, it is in fact a statement of God's unfathomable nature familiar to St. Augustine's moral theology.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>90</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 108; Marsh, 314.

<sup>91</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 111: '*Satius est autem bonum velle quam verum nosse*'; Marsh, 318.

<sup>92</sup> Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 107–111; Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 40–1.

<sup>93</sup> Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 107.

<sup>94</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 108: '*Quid profuerit autem nosse quid est virtus, si cognita non ametur?*'; Marsh, 314.

<sup>95</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 111: '*Itaque longe errant qui in cognoscenda virtute, non in adipiscenda, et multo maxime qui in cognoscendo, non amando Deo tempus ponunt. Nam et cognosci ad plenum Deus in hac vita nullo potest modo, amari autem potest pie atque ardentius* ...'; Marsh, 318.

<sup>96</sup> E.g. Augustine, *Sermones*, 113.3.5; *De Genesi ad litteram*, 12.31.59.

Petrarch's intention is not to limit the value of knowledge, but rather to criticise the man who sought knowledge of God and virtue out of intellectual pride. Man is, after all, capable of knowing *something* about virtue and *something* about God. What matters is the end for which it is sought. It is impossible, Petrarch argues, to love the unknown, but it is enough

to know God and virtue no more than is granted, so that we may know Him to be the most radiant, most judicious, most kind and inexhaustible fount of all good, by whom and through whom and in whom we are as good as we are, and know also that virtue is the best thing after God.<sup>97</sup>

Once a man knows this, then he shall love God, and love virtue for God's sake with his whole heart and being.<sup>98</sup>

As a result, Petrarch's assertion that 'it is preferable (*satius*) to will the good than to know the truth' appears to be misleading. It is not that Petrarch advocated prioritising *voluntas* over knowledge in the pursuit of virtue, but rather that the distinction between the two serves to highlight the importance of the proper end of knowledge. Where knowledge is sought for its own sake it will bring him neither virtue nor happiness. Where knowledge is sought for the sake of loving what is known, a man will come to love God and virtue fully. Knowledge, in other words, precedes *voluntas*.

This connection between knowledge and *voluntas* is repeated and expanded in the fourth book of the *Invective contra medicum*, which was compiled out of a series of earlier letters in 1355.<sup>99</sup> Here, Petrarch not only equates understanding with orientation, but also develops his discussion of knowledge to explain the opposition between the mortal and the eternal in a manner which provides a further parallel to the argument in the first pages of the *Secretum*.

In rebutting papal physician's accusations, Petrarch explained that 'within the soul is that which makes one happy and miserable.' The man who would be happy, he continued, should divest his soul of worldliness

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<sup>97</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 111: 'Et quanquam prorsus incognita non amentur, satis est tamen Deum eatenus, quibus ultra non datur, ac virtutem nosse, ut sciamus illum omnis boni fontem lucidissimum, sapidissimum, amenissimum, inexhaustum, a quo et per quem et in quo sumus quicquid sumus boni, hanc post Deum rerum optimam.' Marsh, 318.

<sup>98</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 111; Marsh, 318.

<sup>99</sup> Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 123–4; U. Dotti, *Vita di Petrarca* (Bari, 1987), 252–7.

before turning it towards itself and God.<sup>100</sup> Referring directly to the *De vera religione*, Petrarch pointed out that

Plato's observation, which Augustine cited and praised, is widely recognised as true. To cite his very words, 'We seek the truth not with the body's eyes, but with a pure mind. When the soul clings to the truth, it becomes blessed and perfect; and nothing hinders our perception of the truth more than a life devoted to sensual desires.'<sup>101</sup>

The turning of the soul towards itself and God is connected with the search for the truth which resides within. The perception of the truth, however, is inhibited by a reliance on the bodily senses which apprehend only the mortal.

Together, these passages from the *Invective contra medicum* and the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* seem to reinforce the view that Petrarch perceived a direct connection between knowledge and *voluntas*, and recognised that the apprehension of truth was impeded by the bodily senses. In the context of the *Secretum*, this adds weight to the suggestion that Augustinus identifies Franciscus' 'illness' as a problem of orientation stemming from a cognitive failure which is itself caused by the effects of his dependence on the mortal world. In turn, this strengthens the contention that Petrarch's treatment of the will was inspired not by two discordant intellectual traditions, but instead drew most extensively on St. Augustine's early theology, known to him from works such as the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*.

### 5. *Becoming Virtuous: the Meditatio Mortis, Self-Knowledge, and the Role of Reason*

An early-Augustinian reading of Baron and Rico's first 'Stoic' passage serves to illustrate that the first step on Franciscus' path was a full recognition of

<sup>100</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 174–5: 'Intus in anima est quod felicem et quod miserum facit... Constat autem nunquam melius esse anime quam dum, amotis obstaculis viteque compedibus, in Deum atque in se ipsam libera tandem et expedita convertitur.'; Marsh, 148.

<sup>101</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 175: 'Illud quoque platonium, ab Augustino relatum et laudatum, notissime verum est: "Non corporeis oculis," ut verba etiam ipsa ponem, "sed pura mente veritatem videri. Cui cum anima inheserit, eam beatam fieri atque perfectam; ad quam percipiendam nichil magis impedire quam vitam libidinibus deditam."'; Marsh, 148, trans. Marsh, 149; quoting Augustine, *De vera religione*, iii, 3, citing Plato, *Phaedo* 80D–81E.

the corruptibility of the corporeal. Once he had apprehended that mortal things were antithetical to his comprehension of the good, it remained for him to turn to the eternal, as Lady Truth had suggested in the poem.<sup>102</sup> The question of how Franciscus could turn towards the heavenly is the issue which the second of Baron and Rico's 'Stoic' passages concerns.

Immediately following a paragraph restating the *meditatio mortis*, this passage begins with a thinly-veiled attack on dialecticians. As in the fourth book of the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*,<sup>103</sup> Petrarch has Augustine attack those who define human nature 'in all the schools' but who fail to live in accordance with the nature they claim to understand.<sup>104</sup> 'You will not find any shepherd,' he says, 'who is so untutored that he does not know that a man is an animal, indeed, the first of all animals, or, again, anyone who denies that man is an animal both rational and mortal.'<sup>105</sup> Although this point is well known, there are few people who take it to heart. If they did, they would know and live according to their own nature, and so become virtuous. 'If you see a man,' he says,

whose reason is so strong that he organises his life as he follows it, that he subordinates his desire to himself alone, that he reins in the impulses of his mind with its bridle, and that he understands both that he is only distinguished from the savagery of brute animals through it and also that unless he lives by reason, he does not deserve the name of man; who beyond this is so conscious of his own mortality that he has it before his eyes each day, governs himself through it, and, contemptuous of these mortal things, aspires to that life where, made much greater by reason, he ceases to be mortal—this person, you may say, possesses true and useful knowledge about the definition of man.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>102</sup> See note 33, above.

<sup>103</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 48–9.

<sup>104</sup> *Secretum*, I: 'Ista quidem dyaleticorum garrulitas nullum finem habitura, et diffinitionem huiusmodi compendiis scatet et immortalium litigorum materia gloriatur: plerumque autem, quid ipsum vere sit loquuntur, ignorant.'; *Prose*, 52.

<sup>105</sup> *Secretum*, I: 'Hominem quidem esse animal, imo vero animalium principem cunctorum, nemo tam durus pastor invenietur ut nesciat; nemo rursus, si interrogetur, aut rationale animal aut mortale negaverit.'; *Prose*, 52.

<sup>106</sup> *Secretum*, I: 'Siquidem videris adeo ratione pollentem ut secundum eam vitam suam institerit, ut sibi soli subiecerit appetitus, ut illius freno motus animi coherceat, ut intelligat se se per illam tantum a brutorum animantium feritate distingui, nec nisi quatenus ratione degit nomen hoc ipsum hominis mereri; adeo preterea mortalitatis sue conscium, ut eam cotidie ante oculos habeat, per eam se ipsum temperet, et hec peritura despicens ad illam vitam suspiret, ubi, ratione suprauctus, desinet esse mortalis; hunc tandem veram de diffinitione hominis atque utilem scientiam habere dicito.'; *Prose*, 52–4.



This passage is critical for an understanding of the mechanism by which a man who had spurned the temporal could embrace virtue fully. It is, however, lacking both in rigour and detail.

For Rico and Baron, this passage is best understood as another 'Stoic' interlude. Pointing to the emphasis on the *meditatio mortis* theme in the surrounding paragraphs, Baron suggests that the attack on dialecticians and the 'glorification of reason' comes at 'quite an unlikely spot'.<sup>107</sup> The dialogue makes perfect sense, in Baron's view, when the passage is removed and he therefore contends that the 'glorification' of man's rational nature was introduced into an earlier draft of the *Secretum*.<sup>108</sup> Baron's point is broadly reflective of general historical opinion. For Bouwsma, the 'sovereignty of reason' suggested by this passage is a manifestation of the Stoics' attribution of a 'divine spark, identified with reason' to mankind.<sup>109</sup> In Foster's study, it is the role played by this 'divine spark' in combating the desires that 'the wise man cannot help feeling' that reflects the influence of Stoicism.<sup>110</sup> In the same vein, Trinkaus has argued that the emphasis on truth to a rational nature as the key to a self-directed existence can be seen as a revival of the 'ideal of Cicero and Seneca'.<sup>111</sup>

This interpretation is certainly not unjust. In the *De officiis* alone Petrarch would have encountered the view that reason differentiates mankind from animals. Unlike a beast, which is moved by the senses alone, a man

because he is endowed with reason, by which he comprehends the chain of consequences, perceives the causes of things, understands the relation of cause to effect and of effect to cause, draws analogies, and connects and associates the present and the future—easily surveys the course of his whole life and makes the necessary preparations for its conduct.<sup>112</sup>

Reason allows man to apprehend his soul's place within the concatenation of nature and to judge what is proper in life.<sup>113</sup> For Cicero, as well as for Seneca, right reason allows man to comprehend virtue.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 38–9.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 40–1.

<sup>109</sup> Bouwsma, 'The Two Faces of Renaissance Humanism,' 10, 19.

<sup>110</sup> Foster, *Petrarch: Poet and Humanist*, 165.

<sup>111</sup> Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 134; see also 56.

<sup>112</sup> Cicero, *De officiis*, I, iv, 11; trans. W. Miller (Cambridge MA, 1913). See also Cicero, *De finibus*, I, xxx, 107.

<sup>113</sup> Cicero, *Tusc.* I, xvii, 40–xxiii, 55.

<sup>114</sup> Cicero, *De officiis*, I, vi, 18; *Tusc.* IV, xv, 34; Seneca, *Ep.* lxvi, 10–12.



Reason, moreover, underpinned Cicero's recommendation of self-knowledge as the key to the transcendence of mortality. In the rebuttal of Torquatus' Epicurean claims, the Delphic injunction to know oneself is identified with the application of reason to human existence.<sup>115</sup> The man who is 'occupied day and night' in this enterprise will eventually recognise that his soul is 'not limited to this short span of life', and will not merely cease to worry about death, but will also effectively transcend his mortality.<sup>116</sup>

The role played by reason in Stoic moral philosophy appears to have a parallel in Petrarch's treatment of reason in the *Secretum*. When the exact wording of the passage is examined more closely, however, there are some significant problems with a purely 'Stoic' interpretation. Throughout the passage, Petrarch emphasises that man is not only rational, but also mortal, and sketches the relationship between these two components. Although the wording is awkward, Petrarch argues that while it is reason which distinguishes man from the 'savagery of brute animals', the shift in the direction of argument before *adeo* suggests that it is the contemplation of mortality—and not reason—which allows self-governance and permits him to temper himself.<sup>117</sup> This impression is swiftly confirmed in the text. Immediately following 'per [mortalitatem] se ipsum temperet', Petrarch deploys the phrase 'et hec peritura despiciens ad illam vitam suspiret, ubi, ratione superauctus, desinet esse mortalis.' Despite the cumbersome construction, this suggests that the contemplation of mortality is prior to the desire to live according to reason.<sup>118</sup>

It is difficult to find any Stoic precedent for such a line of argument. Nowhere in the works of Cicero and Seneca may we find any similar treatment of mortality. Although it was a matter of concern for both, they consistently strove to devalue death and never advocated the continued contemplation of mortality which Augustinus recommends in the *Secretum*. If anything, Cicero and Seneca presented reason as being prior to the banishment of fears of death and often advised friends to cease worrying

<sup>115</sup> Cicero, *Tusc.* II, v, 16; V, xvi, 44.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, V, xxv, 70.

<sup>117</sup> *Secretum*, I; *Prose*, 52. Although *eam* could be substituted for either *rationem* or *mortalitatem*, the semi-colon which precedes *adeo* in the Carrara edition, and the word order suggest that the latter is the more plausible.

<sup>118</sup> *Secretum*, I; *Prose*, 52. The sub-clause 'ratione superauctus' seems to dispel doubt. Were it *ratio* which allowed a person to govern himself, to despise mortal things, and to aspire to the state where he would no longer be mortal, it would seem unnecessary for Petrarch to have included this clause.

about their demise. In the *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero improvised on a Stoic theme in suggesting that, since the soul is immortal, death should be met with equanimity.<sup>119</sup> Developing this further, he contended that rational contemplation could lead a man to feel a 'union with the divine mind' and cease to think himself 'limited to this short span of life'.<sup>120</sup>

It is perhaps a little too easy to overstress the significance of this problem, particularly given the awkwardness of Petrarch's phraseology, but it is important to point out that, despite its appeal, the identification of this passage as having been drawn from Stoic sources is open to question. As with the first allegedly 'Stoic' passage, however, an alternative heuristic device may be derived from the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*.

In the *De vera religione*, St. Augustine borrowed from Stoic texts in affirming that reason was the faculty which distinguished man from the animals.<sup>121</sup> Granted to humankind by God, reason allowed man to apprehend the light of truth shining from within his soul, and is hence closely connected with self-knowledge. In the *Soliloquies*, Ratio explains that God, like the soul, can be understood through the exercise of reason.<sup>122</sup> Although God illuminates himself, reason allows man to 'see' Him<sup>123</sup> and the self to be reoriented accordingly.<sup>124</sup>

In keeping with his understanding of the nature of truth, however, St. Augustine argued that reason could be inhibited by corporeal desires. Having established that truth is immortal in the *De immortalitate animae*, Ratio demonstrates that the soul contains 'truth' within itself as a form of reason.<sup>125</sup> The soul, however, does not possess reason except as a natural 'memory' which can be recalled or forgotten.<sup>126</sup> The soul can remember truth by turning towards reason, but may jeopardise or even lose its awareness of the truth in succumbing to corporeal phenomena or in fostering worldly sentiments.<sup>127</sup>

If his soul is to recover the 'memory' of truth within itself, therefore, it was necessary for a person to forsake mortal things and to embrace reason

<sup>119</sup> Cicero, *Tusc.* I, xlix, 117–9.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, V, xxv, 70.

<sup>121</sup> Augustine, *De vera religione*, xxix, 53. Cf. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 12.1.1–12.2.2; *Soliloquies*, I, ii, 7.

<sup>122</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, iv, 8.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, I, vi, 12. Cf. Augustine, *De vera religione*, xxiv, 45; xxix, 52.

<sup>124</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, vi, 3.

<sup>125</sup> Augustine, *De immortalitate animae*, 1–2, 10–11.

<sup>126</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 10.11.17–10.12.19. See G. O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (London, 1987), 189–99.

<sup>127</sup> Augustine, *De immortalitate animae*, 6–7.

instead. Elsewhere in his works, Augustine expressed this as a need to seek the *sapientia* accessible to the intellect rather than the *scientia* accessible through the senses.<sup>128</sup> As he explained in the *Soliloquies*, however, a person could only use reason to see the light of God within himself once he had understood the nature of truth and desired it earnestly. As we have already seen, this was contingent on his first having apprehended that truth could be found not in the mortal, but only in the eternal. If reason is to operate uninhibited, therefore, a meditation on mortality and truth is first necessary to quell *voluptas* and to produce a mind unmoved by corporeal desires. In direct contrast to the Stoics, it was not reason which stilled the heart's desires, but the contemplation of mortality. Indeed, at the beginning of the third book of the *Secretum*, Augustinus uses Terence's words to suggest that reason could not be used to control Franciscus' irrational desire for love and glory.<sup>129</sup> Only once desire had been excised through a meditation on death could reason act to uncover the inner truth of the soul, and thus bind the desires of the body. In the second book of the dialogue, Petrarch used Virgil in the manner of Fulgentius to illustrate St. Augustine's contention that once the *meditatio mortis* has excised *voluptas* the mind may thenceforth keep desire at bay.<sup>130</sup>

Insofar as Petrarch recognised that man is a rational animal, St. Augustine's early works would have been an equally valid point of reference as Seneca or Cicero. In that they presented the consciousness of mortality as working hand-in-hand with the exercise of reason, however, the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies* are much more likely sources of inspiration for the second 'Stoic' passage identified by Rico and Baron. It cannot, of course, be said that Petrarch conveyed any of the subtleties of Augustine's early treatment of reason, but he may still be seen to have participated in the spirit of its heritage and the second 'Stoic' passage may be interpreted as conveying adequately the general implications of the epistemological arguments of the *Soliloquies* and the *De vera religione*. Like the young St. Augustine, Petrarch's discussion of the means by which a man may become virtuous begins with a recognition of corporeal mortality. Keeping the fact of his death before him at all times, a man may not only 'govern himself' and become 'contemptuous of mortal things', but will also aspire to 'that life where, made much greater by reason, he ceases to be

<sup>128</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 12.14.21–12.15.25.

<sup>129</sup> *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 160, quoting Terence, *Eunuchus*, 61–3; 56; 57–8.

<sup>130</sup> Note the allegorical treatment of Aeolus and the winds: *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 122–4; referring to Virgil, *Aen.* I, 52–7. Cf. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, IX, 4.

mortal.' Freed of the burden of *voluptas*, reason allows a man to merit salvation for his soul, that part of himself which will not be subject to death or decay.

6. *Breaking the 'Adamantine Chains', the Reception of Grace, and the Function of Prayer*

It would not be inaccurate to say that the 'philosophical' arguments of the first book of the *Secretum* concentrate on the examination of the self. In the second and third books, however, Franciscus' all-too-human failings and *accidia* are considered more closely, and the theological issues of grace and prayer are frequently raised.

In the third book, Augustinus turns to examine the 'adamantine chains' which continue to bind Franciscus, and which prevent him from contemplating both life and death. Love and glory, Augustinus says, persistently occupy Franciscus' mind and, since he is almost proud of them, constitute his worst faults.<sup>131</sup> Of the two, love receives the most intensive treatment and, after a lengthy exchange in which many of his excuses are analysed and dismissed, Franciscus is compelled to admit that he is indeed in thrall to Laura. But despite his awareness that his love is in tension with modesty and virtue, he confesses that he suffers greatly from being pulled in opposite directions.<sup>132</sup> Torn between love and virtue, he feels unable to choose which path to follow completely, and despite his advancing age and greying hair, he is unable to get beyond his dilemma.<sup>133</sup> With great patience, Augustinus restates his earlier admonitions, and urges Franciscus to reflect on the nobility of the mind, the fragility of the body, the certainty of death, and the distance which earthly love has put between him and God.<sup>134</sup> While Franciscus is calling to mind the mortality of his body and trying to quash his desires, Augustinus advises him also to 'weary the ears of the Ethereal King with devout prayer.' Indeed,

no day, no night should pass without tears and solemn appeals, if—having taken pity—the Omnipotent One is to put an end to such troubles. You must take care to do these things; and if you observe them carefully, divine

<sup>131</sup> *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 132.

<sup>132</sup> *Secretum*, III: 'Video nimirum, multoque cum dolore distrahor tam diversis affectibus; ita enim alternis horis insultant, ut modo huc modo illuc turbine mentis agiter; quem toto sequar impetu nondum certus.'; *Prose*, 176.

<sup>133</sup> *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 178–80.

<sup>134</sup> *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 184–88.

help will come and, as I hope, the invincible Saviour will with his right hand give succour.<sup>135</sup>

Franciscus' battle with himself and Augustinus' words of advice are reflective of what Charles Trinkaus has described as the 'tradition of the double consciousness'. For Trinkaus, Petrarch saw man as being 'at war with himself and self-defeating',<sup>136</sup> and 'seriously questions man's capacity to become virtuous through his own powers and will'.<sup>137</sup> Tortured by a divided will, and unable to break the bonds of his adamant chains, Petrarch—Trinkaus has argued—was obliged to limit the importance of self-examination and to view the reception of grace as essential to virtuous transformation. Explaining the relationship between the two more clearly in *The Poet as Philosopher*, Trinkaus suggested that

[f]or Petrarch, the transformation of the self had to come from divine mercy, by grace alone, but first there had to be a mind that knew its errors and the self-deceptions of its affective attachments to alluring but destructive ways of existence. Insight concerning the self was not enough... but insight concerning the self was a needed preliminary to the possibility of grace.<sup>138</sup>

As Franciscus' will was 'both insufficient and divided', he could never completely heal his soul even with the most intense meditation: only grace, Trinkaus suggests, could save him.<sup>139</sup> Drawing a parallel with the later works of St. Augustine, Trinkaus emphasises that 'Petrarch shared the view that man's salvation came by grace alone'.<sup>140</sup> In this respect, Petrarch is held to have foreshadowed certain elements of Reformation theology: on the basis of what is perceived to be a common belief in justification by grace alone, Trinkaus concludes that Petrarch's religious proximity to Luther was 'amazing'.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> *Secretum*, III: 'Inter hec celum devotis orationibus pulsandum; aures Regis etherei piis precibus fatigande. Nulla dies nulla nox sine lacrimosis obsecrationibus transigenda est, si forte miseratus Omnipotens finem laboribus tantis imponeret. Hec agenda tibi cavendaque sunt; que diligentius observanti aderit divinum auxilium, ut spero, et invicti Liberatoris dextra succurret.'; *Prose*, 188.

<sup>136</sup> Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 1:195.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:45.

<sup>138</sup> Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 48.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 111; Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 1:28–41.

<sup>141</sup> C. Trinkaus, 'The Religious Thought of the Italian Humanists, and the Reformers: Anticipation or Autonomy?' in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion. Papers from the University of Michigan Conference*, ed. C. Trinkaus and H. A. Oberman (Leiden, 1974), 339–66, here 349.

Trinka's argument is in some ways attractive. The image of man as continually tortured by the ambivalence of his will, and dependent always on the grace of God for release corresponds well to the idea of Petrarch as a poet who indulged the conflict of his own unresolved cares. It is, however, difficult to sustain Trinka's suggestion that Petrarch advocated salvation by grace alone in anticipation of Luther's reforming theology. The teleological approach explicit in this comparison is itself open to question, but in the present context, it is of greater concern that Trinka's interpretation of Petrarch's theology of grace rests on the assumption not merely that Franciscus had an irreconcilably divided will, but also that there was a fissure between Ciceronian reason and a monolithic 'Augustinianism' in the *Secretum*.

In that it is an examination of his moral condition, the *Secretum* is predicated on Franciscus' inability to raise himself from his misery. This is not, however, to say that Franciscus is by his very nature unable to transform himself. In the final moments of the dialogue, Franciscus thanks Augustinus for his guidance, and resolves to keep the importance of the *meditatio mortis* in mind.<sup>142</sup> Suddenly wavering, however, he then says that he is unable to restrain his desires.<sup>143</sup> 'We're returning to our old debate,' Augustinus replies, 'you say that your will is impotent. But let it be so, since it can't be otherwise, and I pray God that He will accompany you and allow you to reach safety, wherever you wander.'<sup>144</sup> In this last exchange, Franciscus experiences a crisis of confidence in the strength of his will. Far from acceding that this is indicative of a permanent failure, however, Augustinus' response returns attention to the very beginning of the dialogue and reminds Franciscus that the solution to his dilemma lies first with a meditation on death. God willing, Franciscus will indeed redeem himself.

Augustinus' appeal to God to allow Franciscus to redeem himself in this passage is important in that it seems to hint at the operation of the *meditatio mortis* and reason in the context of grace. Further light is shone on the relationship between Augustinus' moral programme and God's benevolence in the second book, shortly before Franciscus' *accidia* is discussed. At the beginning of the second day, Augustinus reminds Franciscus

<sup>142</sup> *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 212–4.

<sup>143</sup> *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 214.

<sup>144</sup> *Secretum*, III: 'In antiquam litem relabimur, voluntatem impotentiam vocas. Sed sic eat, quando aliter esse non potest, supplexque Deum oro ut euntem comitetur, gressusque licet vagos, in tutum iubeat pervenire.'; *Prose*, 214.

that his pride and arrogance have prevented him from knowing his own nature and virtue.<sup>145</sup> Yet, even if Franciscus' strengths were as great as he believed, Augustinus cautions, this should be cause for humility rather than pride, considering that he acquired it not by his own merits, but by the grace of God.<sup>146</sup> This is not to say that Franciscus could not have these strengths as an autonomous individual capable of redeeming himself, but rather that such abilities as he has exist only within the context of grace. So, as Augustinus explains a little later, if a man is chaste, his chastity comes from God even though he might have struggled to overcome his urges.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, it is in overcoming his desires that a man both receives and evidences God's grace. The individual's endeavour works in co-operation with the undeserved grace of God, as Franciscus himself seems to indicate.<sup>148</sup> At the beginning of the third day's discussion, the need for active participation in the work of grace is highlighted explicitly. Reviewing the 'adamantine chains' which bind Franciscus and prevent him from reflecting on his own mortality, Augustinus says that just as the blood of a goat is necessary to shatter adamant, so the blood of Christ has been provided to soften the hardened cares with which he is tormented.<sup>149</sup> Although Christ's blood can penetrate even the hardest heart, however, assent is needed for it to operate. Since Franciscus has not been healed by the blood of Christ, Augustinus can only presume that he has not assented to its effects.<sup>150</sup> As 'assent' is identifiable with orientation, and orientation with cognition, it is possible to see that in order for grace to operate, Franciscus must co-operate with its action through a continuous meditation on death and the rational pursuit of self-knowledge.

Rather than there being an implicit tension between Ciceronian reason and an 'Augustinian' theology of grace as Trinkaus has argued, the co-operation of grace and endeavour which Petrarch describes corresponds to the interplay between grace, will, and reason in St. Augustine's early works, and almost appears to have been carefully designed to avoid accusations of outright Pelagianism.

<sup>145</sup> *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 70.

<sup>146</sup> *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 70–2.

<sup>147</sup> *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 100–2; alluding to *Wisd.* 8:21; Augustine, *Conf.* VI, xi, 19–20.

<sup>148</sup> *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 100.

<sup>149</sup> *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 130; cf. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* XXXVII, iv, 59; Isidore, *Etymologies*, XII, i, 14; XVI, xiii, 2.

<sup>150</sup> *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 130.



In his early and most introspective works, Augustine expressed no doubt that the operation of the intellect could not be understood in isolation from God's mercy. In the *De vera religione*, for example, he stressed that reason, and also the will, worked firmly in the context of grace.<sup>151</sup> By using the reason with which God had endowed him, a man could turn himself away from the temporal and towards the truth.<sup>152</sup> His capacity to do so was predicated on God's divine mercy and would, by extension, also merit the reception of grace.<sup>153</sup>

In opposing the Manichean heresy in the *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine deployed a similar line of argument to demonstrate that 'evil' had no independent existence. Basing his argument on the contention that it was the will which was capable of making man happy or unhappy,<sup>154</sup> he also affirmed that man could recognise how base and fleeting transient things were in comparison with the true happiness that could be enjoyed in the company of God after death by using his reason.<sup>155</sup> Grace played an important role in this. Nothing good, Augustine argued, could come to perception, understanding, or thought which was not from God,<sup>156</sup> and it was only through co-operation with God's grace that humanity could merit salvation.<sup>157</sup>

But while there are several points of similarity between the *De vera religione* and the *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine's determination to contrast the autonomy of moral action with the dualism of the Manicheans in the latter work not only placed greater emphasis on the will, but also did so in such a way that his views were susceptible to misinterpretation. Some years later, the sentiments which Augustine had expressed in the *De libero arbitrio* came to be misappropriated by Pelagius, and the saint's words were misread in such a manner that they seemed to justify the belief that man was capable of achieving salvation independently of grace.<sup>158</sup> Outraged by this, Augustine responded with a series of treatises—including the *De natura et gratia* and the *De gratia et libero arbitrio*—which stressed the over-riding importance of grace, and though he persistently stressed

<sup>151</sup> Augustine, *De vera religione*, xi, 21–xii, 25.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiii, 44–xxiv, 45.

<sup>153</sup> E.g. Augustine, *De diversibus quaestionibus*, ii, 2.

<sup>154</sup> Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, I, xiii.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, I, viii; II, iii–vi, ix, xiii; III, i.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, II, xvii, xix.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, II, xix–xx ff.

<sup>158</sup> On the course of the Pelagian controversy, see, for example, Bonner, *St. Augustine*, 312–93.



the continuity of his thought, he came to place less emphasis on the role of reason and will.<sup>159</sup> Indeed, it is these later, anti-Pelagian works, along with the *De civitate Dei*, which in later centuries came to inform Lutheran and even Calvinist theology.

Petrarch's concern in the *Secretum* is to demonstrate that, despite his battle with himself, Franciscus is capable of effecting rational self-transformation in the context of grace. As we have seen, he accepts that nothing good can come except that it originates in God, and recognises that in assenting to virtue, Franciscus must co-operate with the gift of grace, but at no point does he indicate either that Franciscus was completely impotent or that grace alone was the sole means of attaining salvation. The intellect remains the dominant force in Franciscus' moral life and continues to direct the will, but does so in co-operation with God's mercy. Petrarch's thought in the third book of the *Secretum* is thus closer to the approach and the argumentation of Augustine's *De vera religione* than to either the *De libero arbitrio* or the outlook of the saint's later, anti-Pelagian treatises, and he was a cautious enough reader to avoid incurring the accusation of latter-day Pelagianism.

The role of prayer in the *Secretum* further demonstrates the compatibility of faith and individual endeavour, and Petrarch's debt to St. Augustine's early works. There are, of course, numerous instances of prayers being offered in the course of the dialogue, but a particularly revealing explanation of the importance of prayer itself is provided by Augustinus' recommendation that Franciscus 'weary the ears of the Ethereal King with devout prayer' at the end of his discussion of love.<sup>160</sup> Although, as with the direct references to grace, this could be read as a statement of the limitations of Franciscus' abilities, it may more meaningfully be seen as an extension of Petrarch's debt to St. Augustine's early interpretation of the interplay of faith and understanding. The *Soliloquies* itself begins with a heartfelt prayer in which Augustinus begs to be received as he rushes towards God.<sup>161</sup> In the same manner as Franciscus in the *Secretum*, Augustinus asks for strength.<sup>162</sup> In this respect, Augustinus' prayer in the *Soliloquies* appears almost as a private recapitulation of what is already known and a revision of what is sought. This, indeed, is precisely how

<sup>159</sup> On the problems surrounding interpretations of the development of Augustine's thought on this subject, see, for example, Stump, 'Augustine on Free Will'.

<sup>160</sup> See above, n. 135.

<sup>161</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, i, 5.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., I, i, 6.

St. Augustine defined prayer in the *De magistro*. 'In prayer,' he wrote, 'we cannot hold that God needs to be taught or reminded, so that when we use words we do so to remind ourselves or to admonish and teach others.'<sup>163</sup> As such, the act of prayer to God has the effect of consolidating the devotee's commitment to that which is sought. Understandably, St. Augustine associated prayer with the rational part of human nature. Again in the *De magistro*, he writes that 'God is to be sought and prayed to in the secret place of the rational soul, which is called the "inner man".'<sup>164</sup>

Despite Trinkaus' willingness to distinguish between Ciceronian reason and a monolithic 'Augustinian' theology, therefore, Petrarch's understanding of prayer and grace can be seen as a coherent part of a moral philosophy developed under the influence of St. Augustine's early works. Rather than being an indication of the limitations of his ability autonomously to spurn vice and embrace virtue, the fact that Franciscus prays for God's help reflects the co-operative relationship between grace and rational self-transformation in the *Secretum*.

### 7. *The Secretum in the Context of Renaissance Moral Philosophy*

As we have seen, the *Secretum* advances the view that virtue could be attained through the rational pursuit of self-knowledge and the re-orientation of the self towards God by means of cognition. For Petrarch, the will was subordinate to the intellect, which worked in co-operation with the assistance of grace. Far from being a melange of contrasting Stoic and 'Augustinian' positions, we have observed that Petrarch's dialogue seems to have been derived principally from St. Augustine's early works, and that the relationship between reason, will, and grace seems to bear most similarity to the *Soliloquies* and the *De vera religione*.

As a result of its having been viewed as a work which emphasises the primacy of the will and the over-riding importance of grace, however, Petrarch's *Secretum* is commonly seen as having foreshadowed the moral philosophy of later humanists, including Coluccio Salutati and Lorenzo Valla. In his study of humanity and divinity in humanistic thought, for example, Charles Trinkaus advances the view that, beginning with Petrarch's works, the humanists moved towards the view that—because

<sup>163</sup> Augustine, *De magistro*, vii, 19, trans. in Augustine, *Early Writings*, trans. J. H. S. Burleigh, Library of Christian Classics 6 (London, 1953), 83.

<sup>164</sup> Augustine, *De magistro*, i, 2; trans. Burleigh, *Early Writings*, 70.

of its inherent unreliability—the intellect was not the master, but the ‘minister or agent of the will’, and that the will itself was bereft of strength without the aid of grace.<sup>165</sup> In this, Trinkaus argues, Petrarch, Salutati, and Valla each participated in an intellectual tradition the roots of which ‘are Augustinian and patristic Christian’.<sup>166</sup>

From our analysis of the *Secretum*, it is clear that the place of Petrarch’s dialogue in the context of later humanistic moral philosophy merits reconsideration. On the one hand, our observation that Petrarch saw the intellect as superior to the will, and believed the relationship between cognitive self-transformation and grace to be co-operative begs the question of how far his thought bears comparison with that of figures such as Salutati and Valla. On the other hand, the fact that the Petrarch drew inspiration from a consistent interpretation of St. Augustine’s early works rather than an eclectic reading of his later writings raises the question of the degree to which his understanding of the bishop of Hippo’s theology tallied with that of later thinkers whose debt to the saint is similarly well-recognised. Although the scope of this study precludes us from giving fully comprehensive answers to this questions, and prevents a complete survey of Renaissance ethics, the examples of Salutati and Valla will perhaps shed some light on the manner in which a revised reading of the *Secretum* may impact upon the manner in which Petrarch is seen to have contributed to the development of humanistic thought on reason, will, and grace. In the following, key aspects of the *Secretum* will first be compared with salient features of the thought of Salutati and Valla; in a second section, the nature of their Augustinianism will be evaluated.

(a) *Petrarch, Salutati, and Valla on intellect, will, and grace*

In making cognition, rather than the will, the determinant of virtue, Petrarch stood at some remove from both Salutati and Valla, and it is not unreasonable to suggest that Petrarch’s contribution to the evolution of the humanistic understanding of *voluntas* has been overestimated. In contrast to Petrarch, both Salutati and Valla attributed only a limited function to the intellect, instead placing greater emphasis on the operation of the will (or the affects), and ascribed a much more considerable role to grace.

<sup>165</sup> Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 2:769f.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:771.

It cannot be denied that Coluccio Salutati occasionally expressed opinions which were consonant with the sentiments found in the *Secretum*. In the *De fato et fortuna* (scr. 1396–7), for example, he ‘characterises the intellect as the supreme human power and asserts that the will cannot but choose the *summum bonum* when confronted with it.’<sup>167</sup> Similarly, at some point before he completed the *De nobilitate legum et medicinae* in 1399, Salutati affirmed that the intellect was the characteristic which most clearly distinguished humankind from the beasts,<sup>168</sup> and in around 1401, he had no qualms about describing the mind as the greatest part of man.<sup>169</sup> So, too, in 1405, he defined wisdom in terms of the subordination of the will to the intellect.<sup>170</sup> But while such statements strike a certain chord with the early Augustinianism of the *Secretum*, it would be mistaken to view them as representative of Salutati’s thought. Although it appears that his perspective may have been subject to some variation over time, his more extended treatments of this topic leave no doubt that he believed the intellect to be ancillary to the will, and his elaboration of this point reveals a number of striking differences with Petrarch’s dialogue.

Unlike Petrarch, Salutati saw *voluntas*, and not the intellect, as the key to virtue, and advanced two distinct arguments in justifying his view. On the one hand, the superiority of the will could be justified on logical grounds. While Petrarch had argued that the intellect moved the will, Salutati contended that reason and *voluntas* each had different functions, and that the latter exercised command. In a letter to Giuliano Zonarini written in 1378, for example, Salutati affirmed that while a defect of reason could lead to sorrow even in the face of temporal affluence, the failure to use reason to dominate the senses was reflective of a voluntary submission to the sensory and the temporal.<sup>171</sup> While the intellect played an important role in

<sup>167</sup> R. Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads. The Life, Works, and Thought of Coluccio Salutati* (Durham N.C., 1983), 318; referring to *De fato et fortuna*, 2.8: ‘nobilissima . . . virtutum anime quam intellectum dicimus’ text MS Bibl. Apost. Vat. Lat. 2928, fol. 12 v; and to *ibid.*, 3.8: ‘Quoniam agentia libera et voluntaria preter quam respectu finis ultimi, qui est suprema beatitudo quam neminem contingit nolle, libere possunt velle et nolle quicquid sibi quod voluntate fieri debeat proponatur.’ MS Bibl. Apost. Vat. Lat. 2928, fol. 60 v.

<sup>168</sup> Salutati, *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati*, ed. F. Novati, 4 vols. (Rome, 1891–1911), 2:204.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:488: ‘. . . cumque mens optima pars hominis sit eiusque vigor hominem super hominem evehat.’

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:117–18.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:295: ‘Hec autem, quibus spe, metu, dolore, necnon leticia fluctuamus, in se ipsis bona sunt, in nobis autem tum bona, tum mala. Si bene quidem iis utaris, cooperantur in bonum, si autem abutaris, quis dubitat quin operantur in malum? Occupatio igitur est inter ista versari optima quidem, si in ipsa duce ratione regamur, pessima vero,

overcoming the beguiling influence of the senses and in attaining virtue, reason could not operate without the prior exercise of the will.

It was, indeed, inconceivable to Salutati that intellection was either its own cause or the cause of the will. As he argued in the *De nobilitate*, the intellect was 'not the cause, but the occasion of the will'; it could inform, but not compel the will.<sup>172</sup> The will, by contrast, moved the intellect. Although the intellect might inform the will,

the first action does not even reach the intellect without the consent or command of the will. Indeed, the natural desire of knowing does not belong to the intellect, but to the will, which precedes every intellection and act of the intellect not only in nature, but by reason of time.<sup>173</sup>

The essence of the argument was fairly simple. For Salutati, intellection could not occur without the prior existence of a will to know. A man must *want* to know something before he can rationally attain to knowledge. This being so, it is evident that the desire to know something presupposes a *lack* of knowledge, and hence it follows that while the intellect is dependent on the will, the reverse is not true. The will is capable of commanding the intellect, but is not restricted or determined by the limits of knowledge.

On the other hand, Salutati further asserted the superiority of the will to the intellect on the grounds that since the human intellect was frail and imperfect, it was volition, and not cognition, that was central to man's ultimate end. Like Petrarch, Salutati accepted that despite the pretensions of learned men, human reason was not boundless; but unlike Petrarch, he could not concede that the limited capacities of the human mind were

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si per sensum illecebras dilabamur. Non claremus contra creatorem nostrum, qui fecit hec, non ut occuparemur in eis, sed ut per rationem dominaremur. Tanta tamen est hominum fragilitas, tanta dementia, quod, cum ad imperium sint creati, sponte serviant et sua voluntate subsint quibus debeant dominari.'

<sup>172</sup> Salutati, *De nobilitate legum et medicinae*, ed. E. Garin (Florence, 1947), 194: 'Conceptio quidem intellectus non est causa, sed occasio voluntatis. Non enim quoniam intelligimus volumus, nam semper causaret intellectio voluntatem, sed potius cum intelligimus datur nobis ut velle possumus. "Occasio quidem est," ut noster Cicero diffinevit, "pars temporis habens in se alicuius rei idoneam faciendi vel non faciendi opportunitatem." Unde non bibimus quia vinum habemus, sed bibere possumus cum habemus; habere quidem vinum et bibendi spatium atque locum occasio sunt, sed bibendi voluntas est causa.' quoting Cicero, *De inventione*, I, xxvii, 40.

<sup>173</sup> Salutati, *De nobilitate*, 192: '... etiam ad intellectum non perveniat actus primus sine consensu vel imperio voluntatis. Naturale quidem sciendi desiderium non est intellectus sed voluntatis, quod omnem intellectum ac intellectus actum, non natura solum, sed ratione temporis, antecedit.' trans. Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 1:64 (amended).

sufficient to attain an adequate knowledge of divine matters. Advancing an argument familiar to Academic Scepticism in a letter written some time after the completion of the *De nobilitate*, Salutati contended that the more a man knows, the more he realises he does not know. At best, the knowledge accessible to the intellect was a form of well-reasoned uncertainty.<sup>174</sup> It therefore followed that the intellect was too limited to comprehend the divine. As Salutati asserted in the *De nobilitate*, it was vain to attempt to understand heavenly matters, and, confronted with the inscrutability of God, man should abandon the hope of attaining to a true knowledge of heavenly things.<sup>175</sup> As a consequence, it was absurd to believe that God would have ordained that man's salvation was a matter of cognition alone. The pursuit of the blessed life was thus bound up with the will, on the grounds that it was through the operation of the will alone that the love necessary to salvation could be cultivated. '[S]ince our supreme end is not to know God,' Salutati argued in the *De nobilitate*,

but that supreme beatitude which is to see God, just as He is, and also to enjoy that vision, and to love what is seen, and to adhere to him eternally through love which so unites lover and beloved that whoever clings to God in one spirit with Him, and since we are not able to gain this by science or human speculation, but by the grace of God through the virtues and actions, certainly it is the active life whose principle is the will, not the speculative, which is perfected by the intellect, which pertains to that true happiness, and in that very beatitude the act of the will which is joy is nobler and more beautiful than the act of the intellect, which can be called contemplation or vision.<sup>176</sup>

As this passage suggests, the proper action of the will entailed not only the spiritual sight of God, but also the love of the divine. For this reason, where the will acted freely and responsibly (that is, in accordance with, but not dependent upon, right reason), Salutati was often inclined to identify *voluntas* with charity. As he argued in a letter written to Alberto degli

<sup>174</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 3:306; cf. *ibid.*, 2:319.

<sup>175</sup> Salutati, *De nobilitate*, 164–6.

<sup>176</sup> Salutati, *De nobilitate*, 190: 'Verum quoniam verus et extremus hominis finis non est cognoscere sive scire, sed illa suprema beatitudo, que videre est Deum, sicuti est, visoque frui, visumque diligere illique eternaliter coherere per dilectionem que sic unit diligentium et dilectum quod qui per illam adheret Deo unus spiritus est cum eo, nec hoc adipisci possumus scientia vel speculatione humana sed Dei gratia per virtutes et operationes, certum est ad illam veram felicitatem activam vitam, cuius voluntas principium est, non speculativam pertinere, que perficitur intellectu, et in ea ipsa beatitudine nobilior et formalior est voluntatis actus, qui delectatio est, quam actus intellectus qui contemplatio sive visio dici potest.' trans. Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 1:68.

Albizzi in 1377, it was charity which prepared the mind for virtue, established a basis for happiness, and which laid the path to the cultivation of an enduring goodness.<sup>177</sup>

Salutati's understanding of the will, moreover, diverged from the *Secretum* with regard to the operation of grace. Whereas Petrarch had recognised that the pursuit of virtue involved a certain co-operation with God's will, we have seen that he did not make salvation entirely dependent on grace. In Salutati's thought, the importance of grace was much more pronounced, and man's capacity for redemption on his own initiative more severely restricted.

For Salutati, the defining characteristic of the will was its freedom.<sup>178</sup> But that was not to say that it was free in the sense envisaged by Pelagius. In the *De fato et fortuna*, Salutati went to considerable lengths to explain that the freedom of the will was reliant not on its independence from divine agency, but on its co-operation with God's will. An act was voluntary only insofar as it worked together with God. As Witt has put it, Salutati argued that '[t]he will freely decides to follow a course of action that has been ordained by God from all eternity and prepared for by his provision of all the prior elements appropriate to eliciting the specific response.'<sup>179</sup> As a consequence, Salutati's belief in the primacy of the will was inexorably bound up with the operation of grace. Just as no virtue could be attained without an act of free will, so no will could act freely without God willing that it should be so.<sup>180</sup> God was the source of all free will, and on this basis, it was not without reason that Salutati felt drawn to advocate a form of predestination.<sup>181</sup> Having determined which of mankind were to be saved and which were to be damned, God infused men with the grace necessary

<sup>177</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 1:247–8.

<sup>178</sup> E.g. Salutati, *De fato et fortuna*, 2.6: 'Fatale quidem et necessarium est voluntatem, que de sui essentia libera est, nichil agere nisi libere et omnino cogi non posse, quecumque nobis conditio proponatur.' MS Bibl. Apost. Vat. Lat. 2928, fol. 7 v, quoted at Witt, *Hercules*, 321, n. 37.

<sup>179</sup> Witt, *Hercules*, 322, n. 37.

<sup>180</sup> Q.v., for example, Salutati, *De fato et fortuna*, 1.3: 'Verumtamen si concurrat prima causa, influat celum, assistat complexio, instet primus voluntatis motus, nil resistat omnique disposita sint ad actum, demumque sequatur voluntatis electio, et eius fixum subsequatur imperium, quid fateri vetat in hoc causarum ordine et dispositione necessario effectum qui intenditur provenire?' MS Bibl. Apost. Vat. Lat. 2928, fol. 3, quoted at Witt, *Hercules*, 323, n. 42.

<sup>181</sup> For a useful discussion of Salutati's view of predestination, see, for example, Witt, *Hercules*, 327–30.



for the free operation of will as appropriate. As Salutati put it in the *De nobilitate*,

it was necessary that not only the divine goodness and grace, but also eternal justice should become known, and by a marvellous and most appropriate disposition, it was so done that the grace of generosity appears in the elect, and the splendour of justice in the damned. Indeed, no one is saved by works but entirely by grace. For if salvation is attributed to merits, then there would be no grace but justice, nor grace freely given but conceded in a certain way to the necessity of justice.<sup>182</sup>

Although Lorenzo Valla was unquestionably a more sophisticated and subtle thinker than Salutati, and while his thought is different from that of the Florentine chancellor in a number of significant respects, the understanding of the relationship between intellect, will, and grace found in Valla's writings diverges from the views advanced in Petrarch's *Secretum* in a similar manner. Just as it is mistaken to see Salutati as having followed Petrarch in asserting the primacy of the will, so it would be unjustified to depict Valla as a continuator of the moral programme found in the *Secretum*, and it is important to note three points in highlighting the breach.

In the first place, Valla—like Salutati, but unlike Petrarch—placed certain limits on the power and efficacy of the intellect. Although he rejected the scepticism of the Academics in the *De libero arbitrio*,<sup>183</sup> and set out to correct the perceived errors of Aristotle and his followers in the *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*,<sup>184</sup> Valla nevertheless remained somewhat doubtful as to the degree to which rational knowledge could

<sup>182</sup> Salutati, *De nobilitate*, MS Urb. lat. 201, f. 30r: '...oportebat non innotescere solum divinam benignitatem et gratiam sed etiam eternam iustitiam et mira congruentissimaque dispositione factum sic quod appareat gratia benignitatis in electis iustitiae splendor in damnatis. Nullus ex operibus quidem salvus sit sed prorsus ex gratia. Nam si salvatio tribuatur meritis iam non erit gratia sed iustitia nec gratis data sed quodammodo iustitiae necessitati concessa.' Text quoted at Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 1:359, n. 107; translation at *ibid.*, 1:94 (amended).

<sup>183</sup> Lorenzo Valla, *De libero arbitrio*: 'LOR.:... Unde Achademici, falso illi quidem, sed tamen nihil nobis plane cognitum esse dicebant. ANT.:... Nam Achademicos cum sua persuasione dimittamus, qui cum omnia dubia ponerent, tamen eos dubitare certe dubium non erat; et cum nihil sciri affirmarent, tamen inquirendi studium non relinquebant.'; text in Lorenzo Valla, *Über den freien Willen*, ed. E. Keßler (Munich, 1987), 66, ll. 115–6, 67, ll. 127–30. Hereafter, this edition will be referred to simply as 'Keßler, *UdFW*'.

<sup>184</sup> Lorenzo Valla, *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*, ed. G. Zippel, 2 vols. (Padua, 1982). On the *Repastinatio*, see, for example, the excellent studies by P. Mack, *Renaissance Argument. Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic* (Leiden, 1993); and L. Nauta, *In Defense of Common Sense. Lorenzo Valla's Humanist Critique of Scholastic Philosophy* (Cambridge MA, 2009).



embrace divine truth, and as to the extent to which cognition impacted upon human virtue.

Having denied that reason was the characteristic which distinguished man from the other animals in the *Repastinatio*,<sup>185</sup> Valla was unconvinced that the intellect allowed access to celestial knowledge. Although, allied with a sound grasp of 'ordinary language', reason could be used to gain an understanding of the world,<sup>186</sup> he seems to have felt that the truth about an ineffable God remained beyond the scope of the human intellect. Attacking Boethius in the *De libero arbitrio*, for example, Valla (speaking through the character of 'Antonio') argued that while God 'knows all things for eternity and holds all things present' through 'an intelligence which is beyond reason', it was impossible for man who is 'rational and know[s] nothing outside of time' to 'aspire to the knowledge of intelligence and eternity'.<sup>187</sup> For this reason, Valla's literary *alter ego*, 'Lorenzo', exhorts his interlocutor to abstain from seeking knowledge of God's eternal mystery, and to content himself with a moderate understanding of such things as are appropriate:

Let us not wish to know the height, but let us fear lest we become like the philosophers who, calling themselves wise, are made foolish . . . Let us therefore shun greedy knowledge of high things, condescending rather to those of low estate. For nothing is of greater avail to Christian men than to feel humble. In this way we are more aware of the magnificence of God . . .<sup>188</sup>

<sup>185</sup> Valla, *Repastinatio*, 2:391: 'Quod autem vult hominem esse cum diis rationalem preter cetera animalia et mortalem cum ceteris, utrunque negare possumus. Nam et brutis inesse rationem quantum natura illa recipit, et non magis presare hominem bruto ratione quam aliis duabus anime dotibus, memoria et voluntate, in sequentibus probabo: et qui in paradisorum corporibus et sunt et erunt, licet immortales, nil aliud quam 'homines' sunt appellandi.'; cf. also 1:67–73, 2:409–10.

<sup>186</sup> See below, ch. VI.

<sup>187</sup> Valla, *De libero arbitrio*: 'Ait enim Deum per intelligentiam, quae supra rationem est, et per aeternitatem omnia scire, omniaque habere praesentia. At ego ad cognitionem intelligentiae et aeternitatis, qui rationalis sum et nihil extra tempus agnosco, aspirare qui possum?' Kessler, *UdFW*, 70, ll. 157–61; translation taken from Lorenzo Valla, 'Dialogue on Free Will,' trans. C. Trinkaus, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. E. Cassirer, P. O. Kristeller, and J. H. Randall, Jr. (Chicago, 1948), 155–82, here 160. Hereafter, this translation will be referred to as 'Trinkaus'.

<sup>188</sup> Valla, *De libero arbitrio*: 'Nolimus altum sapere, sed timeamus ne simus philosophorum similes, qui dicentes se sapientes, stulti facti sunt . . . Fugiamus igitur cupiditatem alta sapiendi, humilibus potius consentientes. Christiani namque hominis nihil magis interest quam sentire humiliter: hoc enim modo magnificentius de Deo sentimus . . .' Kessler, *UdFW*, 140, l. 800–142, l. 802; 144, ll. 821–25; trans. Trinkaus, 181.

So too, in the *De voluptate*, he contended that it was vain for man to seek to penetrate the mysteries of the divine from within a corporeal body.<sup>189</sup> Indeed, it might well be argued that the main object of the *De voluptate* was to highlight the impossibility of attaining to a true knowledge of the good through rational enquiry alone. Of far greater value than knowledge were humility and charity.<sup>190</sup>

In the second place, Valla contradicted Petrarch in identifying the will as superior to the intellect.<sup>191</sup> Like Salutati, he seems to have accepted that the intellect (together with the memory) could minister to the will,<sup>192</sup> but nevertheless granted primacy to *voluntas*. In the *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione*, for example, he pointedly rejected the classical and scholastic view of man as an *animal rationale*, and instead offered a definition of man as a *animal liberum*, in which *liberum* connoted the will.<sup>193</sup> This is not, however, to say that Valla always spoke in terms of *voluntas*, and it is of particular importance to note that, in contrast to both Petrarch and Salutati, his engagement with the question of moral agency is framed not around the will, but around the affects, a preference which is a product of his rejection of Aristotle's conception of the soul.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>189</sup> Valla, *De voluptate*, III, xviii, 4–xix, 1: 'Ideoque videmus de his rebus per allegorias et enigmata fieri mentionem, quod declarabat Moyses cum ad populum velata facie loqueretur. Que quidem enigmata et allegorias si quis excutere et ad liquidum perducere velit, frustra nimirum laborabit. Non potest enim facies nostra operimento detegi quod corpus est. Dicitur nanque: "Nec oculus vidit nec auri audivit nec in cor hominis ascendit que preparavit Deus diligentibus se."' referring to *Exodus* 34:33 and quoting *1 Cor.* 2:9; text in Lorenzo Valla, *Von der Lust oder Vom wahren Guten*, ed. E. Kessler (Munich, 2004), 332. Hereafter, this edition will be referred to as 'Kessler, *Lust*'.

<sup>190</sup> Valla, *De libero arbitrio*: 'Nescimus huius rei causam: quid refert? fide stamus, non probabilitate rationum. Scire hoc multum ad corroborationem fidei faceret? Plus humilitas. Ait Apostolus: "Non alta sapientes, sed humilibus consentientes." Scientia divinorum utilis est? utilior caritas. Dicit enim idem apostolus: "Scientia inflat, caritas autem aedificat."' quoting *Rom.* 12:16, *I Cor.* 8:1, and *II Cor.* 12:7, Kessler, *UdFW*, 140, ll.792–98.

<sup>191</sup> The scope of this work prevents the following paragraph from being comprehensive, and it should be noted that a number of Valla's arguments on *voluntas*, *voluptas*, and *virtus* are treated with unfortunate lightness of touch for reasons of brevity.

<sup>192</sup> Valla, *Repastinatio*, 1:66–71.

<sup>193</sup> Lorenzo Valla, *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione*, ed. W. Setz, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters* 10 (Weimar, 1976), 163, ll. 10–20; for a discussion of this point, see S. I. Camporeale, 'Lorenzo Valla's "Oratio" on the Pseudo-Donation of Constantine: Dissent and Innovation in Early Renaissance Humanism,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57/1 (Jan. 1996): 9–26, here 20.

<sup>194</sup> It is not without reason that Trinkaus has observed that 'Valla moved from the comparatively moderate vision of volitional and operational man to ... a "passional" view of human nature.' Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 2:770–1.

The passions were, for Valla, not an inexcusable evil (as the Stoics had argued), but a natural part of human nature, and could be considered either good or bad depending on the ends to which they were directed. Adapting elements of Epicurean thought to a Christian end in the *Repastinatio*, Valla argued that since the will naturally seeks its own good, the pursuit of true *voluptas* (which he saw as a synonym for *fruitio*, *delectatio*, *amor*, *felicitas*, or *beatitudo*) could be viewed as the pursuit of that which was morally good in a Christian sense.<sup>195</sup> Hence, since virtue is the will, or the love of the good, and the hatred of evil,<sup>196</sup> Valla was able to contend that *voluptas* itself—freed from its negative connotations—was the key to virtue. The four cardinal virtues therefore not only belonged to the affects rather than to the intellect or memory, but could also be replaced with pleasure.<sup>197</sup> The same point lies at the heart of the *De voluptate*.<sup>198</sup> Since man naturally wills only his own good, and since the affects were a part of human nature, it was reasonable for the character of Antonio da Rho to argue that the pursuit of *voluptas* could be associated with the pursuit of virtue.<sup>199</sup>

In the third place, Valla—like Salutati, but unlike Petrarch—connected the freedom of the will with the operation of grace and with predestination.<sup>200</sup> Although the *Repastinatio* and the *De voluptate* had indicated that virtue and vice were within the purview of the affects, Valla had not clearly established why some men embraced the good and others remained immune. Turning to this question in the *De libero arbitrio*, he offered a comparatively simple solution: the orientation of the will derived ultimately from God. 'For,' Valla argued, 'the will has an antecedent cause which is seated in the wisdom of God. Indeed, the most worthy reason may be adduced as to why He hardens this one and shows mercy

<sup>195</sup> Valla, *Repastinatio*, 1:91: '...voluptatem solam petit voluntas.'; *ibid.*, 95: 'Hec est voluptas vera, que comes est et socia virtutis. Hec igitur sive 'voluptas' sive 'delectatio' sive 'fruitio' sive 'amor' sive aliud simile nomen, in idem recidunt. Que cum summa et consummata est vocatur 'beatitudo' sive 'felicitas'...'

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:85: 'Virtus... est voluntas sive amor boni, odium mali...'

<sup>197</sup> On which see Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, 72–3.

<sup>198</sup> For a useful discussion of the *De voluptate*, see B. Vickers, 'Valla's ambivalent praise of pleasure: Rhetoric in the service of Christianity,' *Viator* 17 (1986): 271–319.

<sup>199</sup> Valla, *De voluptate*, III, iii: Kefler, *Lust*, 282–90.

<sup>200</sup> On Valla's understanding of the free will in the *De libero arbitrio*, see, for example, E. Kefler, 'Freiheit des Willens in Vallas "De libero arbitrio",' in *Acta Conventus Neolatini Turonensis*, ed. J.-C. Margolin (Paris, 1980), 637–47.

to that, namely, that He is most wise and good.<sup>201</sup> That was not, of course, to say that the human will was anything other than free. Although Valla avoided Salutati's treatment of human co-operation with the divine will, he followed the Florentine chancellor in arguing that the freedom of the will was in no way impaired by the fact that God could foresee human actions and was the source of all good action. Were God's foresight and grace to compel man, Valla argued, his will would no longer be free.<sup>202</sup> But the reasons for God's choosing whom to save and whom to condemn to damnation nevertheless remained inscrutable.

The question of foresight—overlooked by Salutati and absent from Petrarch's thought—was, however, something of a problem, and it is perhaps not unjust to observe that the difficulty which the issue presented was partly a consequence of Valla's having devoted so little attention to the idea of human co-operation with grace. In order to defend the view that foreknowledge did not impede free will, Valla was obliged to suggest that God's foresight entailed no necessity. Using the deliberately absurd example of 'Antonio' moving his feet, Valla argued that it was theoretically possible for man to will something different to that which God had foreknown, although it was, he contended, a matter of faith to believe that God's foreknowledge could not be wrong.<sup>203</sup> But while foreknowledge did not place the human will under any obligation, Valla nevertheless remained convinced that in matters of justification, God had predestined some men to salvation and others to damnation. In simple terms, Valla contended that what God predestined, he also foreknew; but not everything that God foreknew was a matter of predestination.

(b) *The role of Augustinian theology in Petrarch, Salutati, and Valla*

It is clear that the moral programme outlined in Petrarch's *Secretum* differs significantly from the thought of both Salutati and Valla with respect to the operation of intellect, will, and grace. But this observation raises a further question. As we have previously observed, the content of Petrarch's

<sup>201</sup> Valla, *De libero arbitrio*: '...nam voluntas habet antecedentem causam quae sita est apud sapientiam Dei. Siquidem cur ille hunc induret, illius misereatur, ut est sapientissimus et optimus, dignissima causa adducitur...'; Keßler, *UdFW*, 126, ll. 662–65; trans. Trinkaus, 176–7.

<sup>202</sup> Valla, *De libero arbitrio*: 'Nunc vero nullam necessitatem affert, nec privat nos libertate arbitrii hunc indurans, illius miserans, cum sapientissime ac sanctissime hoc agat...' Keßler, *UdFW*, 126, ll. 672–75.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.; Keßler, *UdFW*, 88, l. 312–96, l. 396.

dialogue was inspired principally by a close reading of St. Augustine's theology. He was, however, certainly not alone in looking to the bishop of Hippo for inspiration in moral matters. Although it would be mistaken to suggest that their thought was based solely on Augustinian theology, both Salutati and Valla were also avid readers of St. Augustine's works and took pains to integrate elements of his thought into their own engagement with problems of moral philosophy. Augustine was among Salutati's favourite authors, and, as Ullman's study has revealed, the Florentine chancellor apparently knew the majority of the saint's works.<sup>204</sup> Moreover, as Witt has rightly noted, Augustine was the inspiration for Salutati's view of free will and divine providence, and his understanding of evil similarly underpinned the humanist's conception of virtue and vice.<sup>205</sup> Valla, too, was an ardent student of St. Augustine, having studied a significant number of his works. And while Valla's relationship with the saint is somewhat more complex than Salutati's,<sup>206</sup> it is nevertheless true that, despite Poggio Bracciolini's criticisms,<sup>207</sup> his ideas were in many important respects 'derivative from those of St. Augustine.'<sup>208</sup> Indeed, as Trinkaus has correctly pointed out, Valla drew many of his positions from Augustine's 'elaborate application' of the Pauline epistles 'to the history, religion and philosophy of antiquity.'<sup>209</sup> If Salutati and Valla offered views of intellect, will, and grace that were at odds with the moral philosophy of Petrarch's *Secretum*, how are we to explain the fact that they each drew heavily on the theology of St. Augustine?

The answer lies in the many faces of St. Augustine. While Trinkaus is undoubtedly correct to have drawn attention to the important role played by St. Augustine's theology in the formation of the moral philosophy of the early humanists,<sup>210</sup> it would be mistaken to suppose that the trajectory of the saint's influence was linear or that he signified the same thing to all humanists. The very diversity of his thought—which has given rise to so many misunderstandings in the study of Petrarch's writings—allowed the bishop of Hippo to be, quite literally, all things to all people, a veritable chimera of inspiration, who could supply authority for divergent

<sup>204</sup> B. L. Ullman, *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati* (Padua, 1963), 216–18.

<sup>205</sup> Witt, *Hercules*, 296–7.

<sup>206</sup> See, for example, S. I. Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla: Umanesimo e Teologia* (Florence, 1972), *passim*, but esp. 235–76, 287–95, 304–11, 323–6.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 341–2.

<sup>208</sup> Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 1:137.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:150.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:57.

opinions within the framework of Christian belief with equal facility. Engaging in numerous different controversies throughout his life, and continually approaching key theological questions from different perspectives, Augustine placed a different emphasis on the various aspects of moral agency (intellect, will, and grace) as immediate circumstances demanded, and thus allowed later generations to interpret his works in often divergent ways.

Although their works bear the impression of St. Augustine's influence, the character of the Augustinianism which attracted Salutati and Valla was markedly different from that of Petrarch's *Secretum*. While, for Petrarch, a number of St. Augustine's early writings—including the *Soliloquies* and the *De vera religione*—provided inspiration for the view that the intellect was prior to the will, and that the rational pursuit of self-knowledge worked in tandem with the *meditatio mortis* in the search for truth and virtue, Salutati and Valla were able to take from St. Augustine quite contrary views with equal justification.

Throughout his life, Augustine consistently affirmed that reason was a characteristic part of the human soul,<sup>211</sup> and recognised that the rational intellect allowed man to access eternal truths.<sup>212</sup> But whereas his earlier, most personal and introspective, works (and particularly the *Soliloquies*) often appear to set great store by the intellect, Augustine came to believe that the human capacity for rational knowledge was limited by weakness and sin, and expressed his reservations most strongly—but not exclusively—in his anti-Manichean writings and in his more mature works. Whereas Petrarch seems to have been most strongly affected by Augustine's confidence, it was the saint's uncertainty which appears to have impacted upon Salutati and Valla.

In both the *Confessiones* and the *De civitate Dei*, for example, Augustine asserted that the mind was too weak to attain to truth by its reason alone, and seems to have been deeply troubled by the Platonic question of how a man could know what he does not know.<sup>213</sup> Presaging the views of Salutati in particular, Augustine argued in the early *De utilitate credendi* that faith and authority were necessary for understanding to proceed:

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<sup>211</sup> E.g. Augustine, *De quantitate animae*, 13.22; *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum*, 1.27.52; *De civ. Dei*, XI, 27.

<sup>212</sup> E.g. Augustine, *De magistro*, 12.40.

<sup>213</sup> Augustine, *Conf.* VI, v, 8; *De civ. Dei*, XI, 2.

When religion is the object of our quest, God alone can provide a solution for this great difficulty. We ought not to be seeking true religion unless we believe that God is, and that he brings help to human minds. For what are we trying so hard to investigate? What do we hope to obtain? What do we desire to reach? Something that we do not believe exists or can possibly be ours? Nothing could be more perverse.<sup>214</sup>

So too, in the *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine pointed out that just as faith was necessarily prior to rational inquiry, so no understanding (however limited) could be attained without God's help. The character of 'Augustinus' confesses that

I was so afflicted and overwhelmed with such masses of vain fables that, had not my love of finding the truth obtained divine aid, I could never have found my way out . . . May God grant His aid, and give us to understand what we have first believed. The steps are laid down by the prophet who says: 'Unless ye believe ye shall not understand.'<sup>215</sup>

If faith and divine assistance were not necessary for understanding, and if understanding led to faith, Augustine argued, it would be impossible to comprehend why philosophically competent pagans would not believe. While Petrarch would have agreed that the pursuit of truth was connected with divine assistance in some measure, he would have disagreed with (this) Augustine, Salutati, and Valla over the implications of such a view, and would have attributed the imperviousness of philosophically able pagans in the fourth and fifth centuries not to a weakness of faith, but to a cognitive error.

Whereas the discussion between 'Augustinus' and 'Ratio' in the *Soliloquies* had stressed the over-riding importance of rational self-knowledge, Augustine's priorities shifted in opposing the Manicheans, and his rejection of the autonomous existence of evil could not be justified through an appeal to the intellect alone. Since reason was limited by human weakness, and was dependent upon faith and heavenly aid for understanding, Augustine came to place greater emphasis on the will as the determinant of virtue and vice in a manner which is evocative of both Salutati and Valla. Faith was, after all, an act of will rather than of intellect. In his anti-Manichean dialogue, *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine pointed out that while reason was man's highest faculty, it was the will which was moved a man

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<sup>214</sup> Augustine, *De utilitate credendi*, xiii, 29; trans. Burleigh, *Early Writings*, 315. Cf. also Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 11.8.15.

<sup>215</sup> Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, ii, 4, quoting *Isaiah* 7:9; trans. Burleigh, *Early Writings*, 114–15.



towards right action and happiness, or—by extension—towards the bad and unhappiness.<sup>216</sup> Will not only provided the impetus towards understanding and wisdom,<sup>217</sup> but also acted as the mechanism by which a man oriented himself towards virtue or vice: ‘whoever wishes to live rightly and honourably, if he prefers that before all fugitive and transient goods, attains his object with perfect ease. In order to attain it he has to do nothing but to will it.’<sup>218</sup> With this in mind, Augustine later went on to argue that the will to good was not incompatible with the affects in a manner which seems to have touched Valla in particular. Pointing out that the passions were entirely natural, Augustine suggested that it was not necessary to ‘suppress our passions as the Stoics teach, or even restrain them as the Peripatetics advise, but direct them to a good end.’<sup>219</sup>

Just as his attack on Manichean thought obliged him to prioritise the will over reason, Augustine’s dispute with the Pelagians obliged him to temper his view of the will with a more forceful view of grace, and while Petrarch appears to have been conscious of the saint’s position during this later controversy, it was Salutati and Valla who gave it greater credence. As Pelagius was later to see, however, the *De libero arbitrio* could be read in such a way that Augustine might appear to have described ‘the freedom of the will in such a way as to leave no room for the grace of God.’<sup>220</sup> As he pointed out in the *De natura et gratia* and the *Retractiones*, however, Augustine had apparently not intended to suggest that man could achieve merit through the free choice of the will alone. Although he accepted that he had argued that virtue and vice were the result of *voluntas*, he explained that the will was nothing without grace, and that the action of grace ensured its freedom. ‘Certainly, will is that by which a man sins or lives righteously,’ Augustine wrote, anticipating the arguments used by Salutati and Valla, ‘[b]ut mortals cannot live righteously and piously

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid., xiv, 30: ‘The eternal law . . . has established firmly and unchangeably that merit accrues from willing, and that happiness is the reward of goodness and unhappiness the punishment of badness. So when we say that men are unhappy voluntarily, we do not mean that they want to be unhappy, but that their wills are in such a state that unhappiness must follow even against their will.’ trans. Burleigh, *Early Writings*, 130.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., xii, 25; xxi, 34; Burleigh, *Early Writings*, 127, 133.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., xiii, 29; trans. Burleigh, *Early Writings*, 129.

<sup>219</sup> L. A. Panizza, ‘Lorenzo Valla’s *De Vero Falsoque Bono*, Lactantius and Oratorical Scepticism,’ *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978): 76–107, here 101; q.v. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, IX, 4–5; XIV, 8–9.

<sup>220</sup> Augustine, *Retractiones*, I, ix, 3; trans. Burleigh, *Early Writings*, 103.



unless the will itself is liberated by the grace of God from the servitude to sin into which it has fallen, and is aided to overcome its vices.<sup>221</sup>

In the same way as the divergence between Petrarch and later humanistic thought can be linked to the development of Augustine's thought over the course of various controversies, so the divergence between Salutati and Valla in matters of predestination and foreknowledge can be linked to subtle changes in the saint's views in the latter part of his life. Whereas in works such as the *De gratia et libero arbitrio* (scr. 426/7) and the *De spiritu et littera* (scr. 412), Augustine had attempted to argue—as Salutati was later to do—that a certain co-operation between grace and human will was necessary for voluntary acts to remain susceptible to moral judgement,<sup>222</sup> the slightly later *De dono perseverantiae* (scr. 428/9) suggests that a correctly ordered will derives its meritorious quality only from grace.<sup>223</sup> In advancing this latter view, Augustine—like Valla—avoided the pressing question of why God should grant his grace to some and not to others, and instead concentrated on the relationship between predestination (the preparation for grace)<sup>224</sup> and foreknowledge. Anticipating Valla's *De libero arbitrio* in the *De civitate Dei*, Augustine countered Cicero's suggestion that neither men nor gods could have knowledge of the future and pointed out that God knew all things in advance,<sup>225</sup> but qualified this by adding that God's foreknowledge did not place the human will under any necessary obligation and hence did not impair the freedom of *voluntas*.<sup>226</sup> Nevertheless, in the *De dono perseverantiae* and the *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, Augustine explicitly rejected the suggestion that God's foreknowledge necessarily implied predestination.<sup>227</sup> The suggestion that God's foreknowledge was causally linked with predestination was tantamount to accepting the Pelagians' heretical belief that grace was granted in response to human merit. As Gerald Bonner has put it, '[m]en are chosen in order that they may believe and not because they believe.'<sup>228</sup> Hence,

<sup>221</sup> Augustine, *Retractiones*, I, ix, 4; trans. Burleigh, *Early Writings*, 103.

<sup>222</sup> Augustine, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 17.33; *De spiritu et littera*, 34.60.

<sup>223</sup> Augustine, *De dono perseverantiae*, 11.26–7; 8.16.

<sup>224</sup> Augustine, *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, 10.19. Note that this work is contemporaneous with the *De dono et perseverantiae*.

<sup>225</sup> Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, V, 9.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, V, x.

<sup>227</sup> E.g. Augustine, *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, 12.24.

<sup>228</sup> Bonner, *St. Augustine*, 349; Augustine, *De dono perseverantiae*, 17.34.

for Augustine, as for Valla, it followed that 'what is predestined is fore-known, but not all that is foreknown is predestined.'<sup>229</sup>

If it would be mistaken to see a direct line of development linking Petrarch's *Secretum* to later humanistic views of intellect, will, and grace, therefore, it would be similarly misguided to suggest that the enthusiasm for St. Augustine which was shared by Petrarch, Salutati, and Valla was of the same quality. Although all three drew significantly on St. Augustine's theology in their works, they each looked to different elements of the saint's thought, and viewed the bishop of Hippo in different terms. In reality, the Augustine known to Petrarch, Salutati, and Valla, had not one identity, but three. Whereas Petrarch took from St. Augustine's early, introspective works a confidence in the efficacy of cognition, self-knowledge, and the *meditatio mortis* in the context of faith and grace, Salutati and Valla took from Augustine's anti-Manichean and mature works the view that the will took priority over the intellect; and while Salutati differed from Petrarch in stressing the will's co-operation with grace and the role of predestination as a result of his greater affinity with Augustine's later works, Valla differed from Salutati in drawing a sharp distinction between foreknowledge and grace in emulation of St. Augustine's final, anti-Pelagian works. The implications of this are striking. On the one hand, it is clear that Petrarch's role in the evolution of humanistic views of the will has been dramatically over-stated, and it appears that there is more to distance the *Secretum* from the works of Salutati and Valla than there is linking them. On the other hand, while St. Augustine exercised a dominant influence on early humanistic moral philosophy, it would be mistaken to believe that it was the *same* Augustine who spoke to Petrarch, Salutati, and Valla, and it would perhaps be more accurate to say that the early humanists collectively looked at his works not through a common lens, but through a kaleidoscope which revealed an image of his thought cast in a multitude of different shapes and colours.

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<sup>229</sup> J. Wetzel, 'Predestination, Pelagianism, and foreknowledge,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Stump and Kretzmann, 49–58, here, 50.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### ALL IN THE MIND: *OTIUM* IN THE *DE OTIO RELIGIOSO*

##### 1. *Living Virtuously: Salutati's De Seculo et Religione and Petrarch's De Otio Religioso*

Italian humanists of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries claimed moral philosophy as the fifth *studia humanitatis* and much scholarship has been devoted to uncovering the various attempts to define concepts such as 'happiness', 'wisdom', and 'virtue'.<sup>1</sup> Yet the first humanists were not merely interested in the abstract: they were as deeply concerned with the identity of the virtuous life as they were with the nature of virtue itself. This question of how to conceive of the life of virtue was in many ways inherited from 'traditional medieval problems of ecclesiastical morality' and, overlapping with concepts of civic engagement, affected by aspects of mendicant thought.<sup>2</sup> It was, however, also influenced by the language and preoccupations which shaped classical treatment of terms such as *otium* and *solitudo*. Navigating the treacherous waters which both connected and divided texts from the classical, patristic and medieval traditions, figures including Coluccio Salutati, Lorenzo Valla, and Ambrogio Traversari were interested in determining whether it was better to pursue a *vita activa*—an active civic life—or to pursue a *vita contemplativa*—a life of meditative withdrawal in which 'special sanctity [was] granted . . . to members of religious orders.'<sup>3</sup>

Coluccio Salutati's *De seculo et religione*, written in about 1381, ranks among the most important humanist treatises on the relationship between the secular and religious lives.<sup>4</sup> Although he later altered his position—most notably in a letter to Pellegrino Zambecari written on

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<sup>1</sup> C. Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises on the Status of the Religious: Petrarch, Salutati, Valla,' *Studies in the Renaissance* 11 (1964): 7–45, here 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; H. Baron, 'Franciscan Poverty and Civic Wealth as Factors in the Rise of Humanistic Thought,' *Speculum* 13/1 (Jan. 1938): 1–37.

<sup>3</sup> Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 8.

<sup>4</sup> Salutati, *De seculo et religione*, ed. B. L. Ullman (Florence, 1957); for a discussion of the treatise, see, for example, Witt, *Hercules*, 195–208.

23 May 1398<sup>5</sup>—Salutati's tract is a defence of the religious life which built on an assertion of the primacy of the will. Despite his role as chancellor of the Florentine Republic, he distinguished sharply between the sinfulness of a life devoted to temporal pursuits and the virtue of a life given over to God. The distinction unmistakably evokes the spirit of St. Augustine's works, and it is perhaps not surprising that Salutati relied heavily on the *De civitate Dei*.<sup>6</sup> As Trinkaus and Ronald Witt have pointed out, however, the distinction between the two modes of living is infused and, indeed, shaped by a notion of primitivism which is derived from, amongst others, Juvenal's *Satires*, Virgil's *Eclogues*, and Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae*.<sup>7</sup> In passages coursing with fervour, Salutati merges this with currents of traditional monastic thought and even aspects of mendicant theology.<sup>8</sup> He urges men to

take away greed, depose riches, renounce the world, lead your life according to the precepts [of Scripture], attempt to fulfil the counsels, subdue your will to the divine will... begin to love God, hate the world, love poverty, hate riches.<sup>9</sup>

The monastic way is the true way, and Salutati speaks admiringly of those who willingly submit themselves to harsh and difficult lives of religious discipline.

Salutati's *De seculo et religione* has frequently been compared to Petrarch's *De otio religioso* and the latter is usually read as having contrasted life in the world with the monastic life in a similar manner. Although Rodney Lokaj, for example, has viewed it as a more critical text,<sup>10</sup> most scholars have seen the *De otio religioso* as a celebration of the life of religious contemplation and as a humanistic appropriation of medieval monastic thought. For Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'Petrarch transformed the monastic ideal of solitude into a secular and literary ideal.'<sup>11</sup> The same view has been shared by Charles Trinkaus, who has argued that Petrarch's treatise presents 'the monastic life not so much as separated from the life

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<sup>5</sup> Text in B. G. Kohl and R. Witt, eds., *The Earthly Republic: The Italian Humanists on Government and Society* (Philadelphia, 1978), 93–114. See Witt, *Hercules*, 351–3.

<sup>6</sup> Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 23; R. Bonnell, 'An Early Humanistic View of the Active and Contemplative Life,' *Italica* 43 (Sept. 1966): 225–39.

<sup>7</sup> Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 21–2.

<sup>8</sup> Baron, 'Franciscan Poverty,' 16–7.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 24; for text, see Salutati, *De seculo et religione*, 81–2.

<sup>10</sup> Lokaj, 'Petrarch vs. Gherardo'.

<sup>11</sup> P. O. Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Renaissance* (Stanford, 1964), 14.

of the worldly but as the safer and more fully religious way. He apparently felt no friction between his own way and that of the monks.<sup>12</sup> Other scholars, however, have seen Petrarch's idealisation of monastic life as the counterpart of a more critical estimation of his own, secular life. Seidlmeyer, for example, has perceived a tension between Petrarch's own *otium* and that which he observed at Montrieux.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Giles Constable has suggested that the text cannot be understood except as the product of 'traditions going back many centuries in monastic history', and as an idealisation of cloistered leisure.<sup>14</sup>

That Petrarch began to write the *De otio religioso* after a short visit to the Carthusian monastery at Montrieux in January or early February 1347 seems to recommend the view that the text was conceived as a meditation on the religious life in the general manner of Salutati's *De seculo et religione*.<sup>15</sup> Returning to his 'own solitude', Petrarch wrote that he came to reflect on the 'blessed sweetness' he had observed and, thanking his hosts, thought further on the religious leisure he had witnessed.<sup>16</sup> The urge to compare his life with that of his brother always having been strong, Gherardo's circumstances at the monastery at Montrieux may indeed have provoked reflection on the relative merits of monastic and secular living, especially as Petrarch continued to be tormented by uncertainties over his literary endeavours and by his unrequited love for Laura while he was composing the text.<sup>17</sup>

While Salutati's *De seculo et religione* is a comparative work which recommends the monastic life as the sole solution to the problematic nature of the human condition, however, Petrarch's *De otio religioso* consciously uses the life of the religious merely as the framework for his discussion of

<sup>12</sup> Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 18.

<sup>13</sup> M. Seidlmeyer, 'Petrarca, das Urbild des Humanisten,' *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 40 (1958): 141–93, here 149–50.

<sup>14</sup> G. Constable, 'Petrarch and Monasticism,' in *Francesco Petrarca: Citizen of the World. Proceedings of the World Petrarch Congress, Washington D.C., April 6–13 1974*, ed. A. S. Bernardo (Padua and Albany, 1980), 53–100, here 64.

<sup>15</sup> For the dating of the *De otio religioso*, see G. Rotondi, 'Le due redazioni del *De otio* del Petrarca,' *Aevum* 9 (1935): 27–77; idem, 'Note al *De otio religioso*,' *Studi petrarcheschi* 2 (1949): 153–66; G. Martellotti, 'Nota critica al testo del *De otio religioso*,' in *Prose*, 1168–9; Cochin, *Le frère de Pétrarque*, 200–1.

<sup>16</sup> *De otio*, I, 1: 'Nunc tandem in solitudinem propriam regressus et totius sacre dulcedinis memor quam apud vos, dominice apes, bene nata gens, hausi eamque nunc ipse mecum in abscondito ruminans, multa reperio que ille michi perbrevis dies in longum profutura tribuerit.' Rotondi, 2, ll. 7–10.

<sup>17</sup> Lokaj, 'Petrarch vs. Gherardo,' *passim*; Cochin, *Le frère de Pétrarque*, *passim*; cf. *Fam.* IV, 1; X, 4.

*otium*. As Ronald Witt has observed, ‘the *De otio religioso* is more properly a praise of the kind of withdrawal connected with the monastic life.’<sup>18</sup> The treatise takes *otium*—and not monasticism *per se*—as its subject, and the text, while called forth by Petrarch’s visit to Montrieux, considers a concept which inhabited an intellectual space he shared with the monastic community, and which implicitly bridged the gap which otherwise divided the religious and the secular.

Although Petrarch’s view of the status of the religious is indeed important, it is not unjust to observe that very little attention has been given to the identity of *otium* itself in the *De otio religioso*. While it is prudent to give due regard to the circumstances in which the tract was composed, and it is necessary to acknowledge that it contains much comment on the nature of monasticism, it is nevertheless striking that—with the exception of Brian Vickers’ survey articles on the history of the concept from antiquity to Renaissance<sup>19</sup>—scholars have been loath to give due attention to the fact that the *De otio religioso* was written primarily as a reflection on *otium*.

The reason for this omission is obscure, but it is not implausible to speculate that it may derive from a willingness to read Petrarch’s work both through the lens of his original visit to Montrieux and in the context of later humanist debates about the status of the religious. Occasioned by contact with monastic life, and a point of reference for successive generations concerned with a tension between the secular and the religious, the text’s perspective on monasticism has come to occlude its central engagement with *otium*.

The implications of this omission are significant for our understanding both of Petrarch’s relationship with St. Augustine, and of the place of his treatise in the history of early Renaissance treatments of the secular and religious lives. In prioritising the text’s monastic audience over the centrality of *otium*, scholars have not only omitted to examine the precise meaning of the concept, but have also overlooked the manner in which Petrarch’s manipulation of the classical and medieval associations of the term conceals an underlying debt to St. Augustine’s early theology that mirrors the tone and argument of the *Secretum*. By the same token, the readiness with which scholars have connected the *De otio religioso*

<sup>18</sup> Witt, *Hercules*, 198–99; see also von Martin, *Coluccio Salutati*, 78.

<sup>19</sup> B. Vickers, ‘Leisure and idleness in the Renaissance: the ambivalence of *otium*,’ *Renaissance Studies* 4/1 (March 1990): 1–37 and 4/2 (June 1990): 107–154.

with later humanistic discussions of the relative merits of the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* has tended to obscure both the divergence of the approaches of Petrarch and his intellectual heirs, and the degree to which this divergence reflects their having admired different aspects of St. Augustine's theology.

In attempting to uncover the early-Augustinian resonances of Petrarch's *otium* and the different forms of Augustinian theology which informed the *De otio religioso* and later treatises, the following will look first at the various contexts in which Petrarch used the term *otium*, before offering a detailed examination of the practices with which it was associated in the *De otio religioso*. These practices having been established, the sources and meaning of *otium* will be considered, and the relationship between classical, medieval, and Augustinian influences in Petrarch's treatises will be discussed. Finally, the connections between the *De otio religioso* and the *Secretum* will be addressed, and a revised reading of the former's place in the history of Renaissance treatments of the religious and secular lives will be offered.

## 2. *Types of Otium*

*Otium*—or 'leisure'—is a concept which is not restricted to the *De otio religioso* and, indeed, recurs in many of Petrarch's works from the period between the early 1340s and the late 1360s. In each text, it appears as an integral part in the life of the man who would be virtuous, and is not only discussed in terms which point towards the blending of classical, patristic, and medieval traditions of the concept in the *De otio religioso*, but is also framed around a familiar distinction between two types of leisure that will serve as the vessel for Petrarch's Augustinian enthusiasm in his treatise.

In the first book of the *Rerum memorandarum libri*, written between early 1342 and September 1343, Petrarch distinguished between two types of *otium*.<sup>20</sup> While the one was nothing more than idleness, hateful to all men and unworthy of commemoration, the other was 'not so much a hatred of the town as consisting in a love of literature and virtue.'<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Rerum memorandarum libri*, ed. G. Billanovich, Edizione nazionale delle opere di Francesco Petrarca, (Florence, 1945), I, 1–10; Wilkins, *The Making of the "Canzoniere"*, 347–60; Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 38–943–4.

<sup>21</sup> *Rerum mem.* I, 1, 2: 'Ceterum cum solitarii otii duo sint genera, illud sompno et inertie amicum quod quidam lucifuge sectantur, qui villis suis utuntur pro sepulcris et in illis se se infodiunt viventes, "nulla re alia quam otii" cognomine gloriosi, non literato tantum sed



Revisiting the same distinction some years later in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Petrarch described that *otium* which was enjoyed for its own sake as 'inert, languid, accustomed to embrace rest, than which nothing is more foul, nothing more like the grave.' The *otium* which was used properly, however, was 'active, labouring even at rest, and busy around honest affairs, than which nothing is sweeter.'<sup>22</sup> In the face of Gaudium's persistent objections, Ratio inveighs against inactive *otium* as prefiguring death, and as the gateway to the vices.<sup>23</sup> *Otium* should not, Ratio claims, be a matter of sleeping idly at a country farm, like the infamous Servilius Vatia, but of constant toil, working always towards the virtue which is the source of joy and quietness.<sup>24</sup>

Petrarch's description of the concept both in the *Rerum memorandarum libri* and the *De remediis utriusque fortune* places *otium* firmly between virtue and vice, and while the use of leisure for productive toil leads to true peace, the enjoyment of idleness brings only depravation and sorrow. In the *Secretum*, this distinction between the *otium otiosum* and the *otium negotiosum* is related specifically to Augustinus' attempt to overcome Franciscus' *accidia* and his susceptibility to the wiles of *fortuna*. *Otium*, properly employed, becomes a response to an inappropriate attachment to temporal things and a remedy for spiritual negligence.

Towards the end of the second book Franciscus complains about the grime and confusion of city life. He would, he claims, far rather live in

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viro etiam obscenum, atque indignum commemoratione pretereo; alterum illud attingam non tam urbis odio quam literarum et virtutis amore constitutum, unde animo vel studiorum cupido vel ad ea nitenti de quibus proxime dicturus sum gratissima proveniunt alimenta...

<sup>22</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 21:

'GAUDIUM: Otio fruor iucundissimo.

RATIO: "Utor" dic: nulla hic re fruendum sed utendum multis habet doctrina salubrior.

GAUDIUM: Delectabile otium est michi.

RATIO: Refert multum hoc ipsum otium quale sit: duas nempe species otii diffiniunt, operosi alteram atque ipsa in requie laborantis ac circa honesta studia solliciti, quo nil est dulcius, alteram inertis et languidi et solam requiem complexi, quo nil fedius, nil similis est sepulchro. De primo igitur sepe magna quedam opera, et mundo utilia et suis autoribus gloriosa, proveniunt, de secundo autem nichil unquam nisi inglorius torpor ac marcidus. Primum illud rite philosophantibus, hoc secundum pigris et ventri somnoque deditis peropportunitatem, ubi nullo interpellante edant licenter ac dormiant.'

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., referring to Seneca, *Ep. Iv*, on which see Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness,' 116, n.116; cf. *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii; *Prose*, 324, where Petrarch misrepresents Seneca's meaning. For further discussion of the treatment of this letter in the *De vita solitaria*, see the following chapter.



the countryside.<sup>25</sup> Augustinus rebukes him for the stupidity of his wish. In conflating the quiet of the countryside with the genuine peace he sought, Augustinus suggests that he is shying away from the contradictions which raged in his soul. 'If the internal tumult of your mind were stilled,' Augustinus tells Franciscus, 'the crashing din around you would still assail your senses, but, believe me, it would not move your mind.'<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Augustinus goes on to argue that flight from the city and removal to some more secluded rural setting could render him just as distant from the attainment of happiness. Since he had not cut out the worldliness which renders him susceptible to the city's assaults upon his senses, the mere memory of the objects of his desires would, in seclusion, continue to make him miserable.<sup>27</sup> Explaining further, Augustinus tells Franciscus that

for the man who carries his illness around with him, a change of place increases his burden, and does not add to his health at all. It may be said to you without impropriety that to a certain young man who was complaining that travel had not brought him any benefit, Socrates replied 'You were travelling with yourself.' It is first necessary for your mind to be prepared by driving out that longstanding burden of cares; only then may you flee. For it has been discovered, not only for the body, but also for the mind, that a cure is inefficient unless the patient is well disposed towards it. Otherwise, you may reach the furthestmost reach of the Indies, and yet ever admit that Horace was right when he said 'those who hurry across the sea change only the sky, but not their mind.'<sup>28</sup>

True *otium*, Petrarch indicates, is not dependent on surroundings, but on labouring towards personal spiritual health.

Examining Franciscus' *avaritia* elsewhere, Augustinus instigates a comparison between the *otium otiosum* and the *otium negotiosum* by contrasting the solace which Franciscus had enjoyed in the past with his present condition. Deliberately stressing the sense of contentment and peace,

<sup>25</sup> *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 120.

<sup>26</sup> *Secretum*, II: 'Quod si unquam intestinus tumultus tue mentis conquiesceret, fragor iste circumtonans, michi crede, sensus quidem pulsaret, sed animum non moveret.'; *Prose*, 120.

<sup>27</sup> *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 164.

<sup>28</sup> *Secretum*, III: 'Quia malum suum circumferenti locorum mutatio laborem cumulat, non tribuit sanitatem. Potest ergo tibi non improprie dici, quod adolescenti cuidam, qui peregrinationem nil sibi profuisse querebatur, respondit Socrates: "Tecum enim" inquit "peregrinaberis". Tibi quidem in primis sequestranda vetus hec curarum sarcina et preparandus est animus; tum denique fugiendum. Hoc enim non in corporibus modo sed in animis quoque compertum est; quod nisi in patiente disposito virtus est agentis inefficax. Alioquin ad extremos Indorum fines penetrare quidem poteris, semper Flaccum vera locutum fateberis, ubi ait: "celum non animum mutant, qui trans mare currunt."'; *Prose*, 164–6, quoting Horace, *Ep.* I, 11, 27.

Augustinus asks him if he remembered lying down on ‘the grassy couch of the meadows’, drinking in ‘the murmur of the writhing waters’ as he looked down on the valley that was open before him.<sup>29</sup> At that time—probably before he first saw Laura—Franciscus had no regard for wealth or the trappings of the world, and yet ‘in his mind was as wealthy as a king, and returning at night to his home, would load his table with unbought dainties.’<sup>30</sup> Although he was *otiosus et solitarius*, Augustinus evokes Cicero’s praise of Scipio Africanus in the *De officiis* in pointing out that, unburdened by worldly desires, Franciscus was neither idle nor alone.<sup>31</sup> Always Franciscus was thinking on some high matter and always he had the Muses for company: he longed for nothing else and was certainly contented.<sup>32</sup>

This *otium negotiosum* is in stark contrast with that leisure which Franciscus currently pursued. Horrified to be accused of ambition a little later in the text, Franciscus attempts to counter Augustinus’ charge by relating his abandonment of the city for the countryside. ‘So it has profited me nothing,’ he exclaims indignantly,

to have fled the city whenever possible, to have despised the mob and public affairs, to have sought out the refuge of the woods and the silent countryside, and to have expressed my hatred for puffed-up honours, now that I am accused of ambition!<sup>33</sup>

Augustinus, however, is swift to correct his interlocutor’s claim. The *otium*, solitude, and *incuriositas . . . rerum humanarum* which Franciscus professes to practice are not an emanation of his virtue, but a product of his desire for glory.<sup>34</sup> Insofar as he claims to be at leisure and spurn temporal things, he is merely expressing the persistence of his own inquietude

<sup>29</sup> *Secretum*, II: ‘Meministi quanta cum voluptate reposto quondam rure vagabaris, et nunc herbosis pratorum thoris accubans murmur aque luctantis hauriebas, nunc apertis collibus residens subiectam planitiem libero metiebaris intuitu; nunc in aprice vallis umbraculo dulci sopore correptus optato silentio fruebaris . . .’; *Prose*, 86.

<sup>30</sup> *Secretum*, II: ‘regum equabat opes animo, seraque revertens nocte domum, dapibus mensas onerabat inemptis’

*Prose*, 86, quoting Virgil, *Georgics*, IV, 130–1.

<sup>31</sup> *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 86. Cicero, *De officiis*, III, i, 4. Cf. also Cicero, *Pro Plancio*, 66.

<sup>32</sup> In Ovid, *Tristia*, I, I, 39ff, *otium* (sc. *otiosum*) is described as the necessary precondition for the writing of poetry. Although in the *Canzoniere*, Petrarch appears to approve this view (q.v. *Canz.* 114, ll. 5–6), in this passage of the *Secretum*, he seems to invert this view. The reference to the Muses indicates that it is the *absence* of desire intrinsic to the virtuous *otium negotiosum* which is the predicate of poetic composition.

<sup>33</sup> *Secretum*, II: ‘Nichil ergo michi profuit urbes fugisse, dum licuit, populosque et actus publicos despexisse, silvarum recessus et silentia rura secutum odium ventosis honoribus indixisse: adhuc ambitionis insimulor!’; *Prose*, 94.

<sup>34</sup> *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 96.

and worldly longings for the sake of literary fame. Franciscus' *otium* is an *otium otiosum*, an idleness which manifests both the cause of his misery and the spiritual sloth which prevents him overcoming his sorrow.

The idea of an *otium negotiosum* as a productive leisure which stands opposed both to idle inaction and, more importantly, to the *accidia* which accompanies worldliness is repeated in the *Invective contra medicum*.<sup>35</sup> Shaped by his need to rebut the claims of the anonymous physician, Petrarch's treatment of *otium* in the *Invective* is influenced by a somewhat different rhetorical strategy. Rather than contrasting two different types of *otium*—as in the *Secretum*—Petrarch juxtaposes his leisure (an *otium negotiosum*) with the lifestyle recommended by the papal physician. Turning the doctor's Aristotelianism back on him, Petrarch's objective is not to demonstrate that *otium* relies on rustic seclusion, but rather to show that *otium*, properly conceived, is opposed to the vices so clearly evident in the city, and is, in fact, a precondition of salvation.

At the outset of his argument, therefore, Petrarch openly accepted the philosopher's belief that man is by nature a political animal.<sup>36</sup> This, however, was not incompatible with solitary leisure: solitude, properly employed, need not harm the polity.<sup>37</sup> His solitude, he pointed out, had never had as its object the avoidance of humanity *per se*, but merely the avoidance of the vices of men.<sup>38</sup>

To illustrate his point, Petrarch offered a satirical treatment of the 'goods' of city life.<sup>39</sup> In the city, one can find 'a brothel, a bath-house, a market, honey-wine, pastry, relish, and similar things.'<sup>40</sup> While some men may revel in these 'goods', however, Petrarch argued that the solitary man finds his happiness only increased by their absence.<sup>41</sup> Although rustic seclusion does indeed lack the pleasures of the vulgar crowds, Petrarch contended

<sup>35</sup> On the *Invective contra medicum*, see U. Bosco, 'Particolari petrarcheschi. I. Precisazioni sulle *Invective contra medicum*,' *Studi petrarcheschi* 1, (1948): 97–110; Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 123–4; Dotti, *Vita di Petrarca*, 252–7. Text in *Invectives*, ed. Marsh, 2–179.

<sup>36</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 169: 'Sed sit nature obsequendum, sitque homo naturaliter animal politicum...' Marsh, 142; referring to Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a1–3.

<sup>37</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 169; Marsh, 142. The same view that in solitude a man can still benefit society is repeated at IV, 172; Marsh, 146.

<sup>38</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 169; Marsh, 142.

<sup>39</sup> This is a parody of Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 7, 1097a–1, 8, 1099b.

<sup>40</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 171: '...concedam, ne de hoc ipso noviter litigandum sit, esse preter virtutem bona, quibus urbes abundare non negem, in quibus fornicem, balnea, macellum, mulsum, adipem, pulmentum, et que sunt similia numeratis.'; Marsh, 144. This description echoes Petrarch's scathing description of worldly existence in a letter to Lombardo della Seta; *Sen.* XI, 10.

<sup>41</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 171; Marsh, 144.

that it has its own delights, which are of great use in the pursuit of salvation—*quies*, *libertas*, and *otium*.<sup>42</sup> St. Jerome is used as an example of a solitary man whose *felicitas* (not to mention his use to humanity) was augmented by his isolation from such things, and his recommendation of ‘holy rusticity’ is praised accordingly.<sup>43</sup> Expanding on this point a few paragraphs later, he wrote that

it is commonly agreed that there is nothing better for the soul than, with all of life’s obstacles and shackles having been cast off, for it to be turned free and unfettered to God and to itself: to be sure, while we are on earth, that can happen nowhere better than in solitude.<sup>44</sup>

Consequently, while not everyone could emulate Jerome perfectly, Petrarch confesses that he would rather be saved alone than perish with the many.<sup>45</sup> Just as ‘solitude’ is defined in relation to the casting off of ‘life’s obstacles and shackles’ rather than to physical isolation, *otium* is once again identified with the negation of worldly desires and the liberty of loving God.

In these four texts, the *otium negotiosum* is a form of ‘active’ leisure. In stark contrast to the *otium otiosum*, it is a leisure from worldly desires and, as Brian Vickers has observed, is consequently placed firmly between *virtus* and *fortuna*. The opposite of sinfulness and vice, it is a continual striving after the good and leads to a genuine peace, untroubled by temporal distractions. As such, it is also conceived in opposition to *accidia*, or spiritual sloth, and is presented as a remedy both to the idle sorrow to which *Gaudium* is prey in the *De remediis utriusque fortune* and to the paralysing melancholy from which *Franciscus* suffers in the *Secretum*.

This understanding of *otium* consciously engages with classical, patristic and monastic traditions, and Petrarch seems wilfully to have woven their different aspects together. Initially, Petrarch’s *otium* seems to resonate

<sup>42</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 173; Marsh, 146.

<sup>43</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 172: ‘Sancta rusticitas sibi soli prodest: studiosa autem solitudo prodesse posse quamplurimum non negatur. Et ipse Ieronimus, qui hoc dixit, quantum solitudine delectatus et quantum ibi mundo utilis fuerit, sciunt omnes.’ Marsh, 146.

<sup>44</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 175: ‘Constat autem nunquam melius esse anime quam dum, amotis obstaculis viteque compedibus, in Deum atque in se ipsam libera tandem et expedita convertitur. Enimvero id, dum sumus in terris, nusquam melius quam in solitudine fieri posse ...’ Marsh, 148. In the following sentences, Petrarch quotes St. Augustine’s rendition of Plato, *Phaedo*, 80D–81E and it is worth noting that St. Augustine’s continuation of the point in the *De vera religione* may have served as the direct model for the early part of this paragraph. See Augustine, *De vera religione*, iii, 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 175; Marsh, 146.

particularly strongly with classical concepts of leisure. His distinction between the *otium otiosum* and the *otium negotiosum*, for example, appears to evoke Ennius,<sup>46</sup> while his belief in the *Invective contra medicum* that the productive use of leisure could have the corollary effect of aiding humanity more generally recalls the sentiments of both Cicero and Seneca.<sup>47</sup> Ovidian motifs, especially in relation to the association between *otium* and composition, are also in evidence in the *Secretum*.<sup>48</sup> By the same token, Petrarch toys with the familiar classical association of urban living with vice. Although he stops short of the underlying moral connotations, Petrarch emulates Sallust,<sup>49</sup> Livy,<sup>50</sup> and Seneca<sup>51</sup> in associating the city with moral turpitude, and implicitly accepting that—while it may not actually ‘transmit’ vice—it could manifest the sinfulness of those who seek its pleasures so ardently.<sup>52</sup>

This classical influence, however, is intertwined with strong patristic and monastic themes, aided in no small part by the absorption of the earlier tradition into the later. Petrarch’s equation of the *otium otiosum* with *acedia* is particularly evocative of the Christian elaboration of classical wariness of unoccupied leisure, and has a parallel in other fourteenth-century treatments of this theme, such as Andrea Bonaiuti’s ‘The Way to Salvation’ in the Spanish Chapel of S. Maria Novella in Florence, which depicts idleness as the vestibule of sin. The moral frame of reference for Petrarch’s *otium* is ultimately Christian, and the importance of virtue as a love of God runs through the four texts examined above. For Evagrius and John Cassian, for example, as for Petrarch, idleness was the vestibule of *acedia*,<sup>53</sup> and in later centuries, St. Benedict and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, amongst others, came to condemn the *otium otiosum* as the enemy of the soul and as an obstruction to virtue.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Petrarch’s

<sup>46</sup> Ennius, *Iphigenia*, recorded in Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, XIX, x, 12; q.v. Vickers, ‘Leisure and idleness,’ 6.

<sup>47</sup> Seneca, *De otio*, IV, 1–2; Cicero, *De officiis*, III, i, 1–3.

<sup>48</sup> Ovid, *Tristia*, I, I, 39ff, see n.32, above.

<sup>49</sup> Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae*, XI, 5.

<sup>50</sup> Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, XXIII, xviii, 10–13.

<sup>51</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* LI, 5; see W. A. Laidlaw, ‘*Otium*,’ *Greece and Rome* 2nd ser., 15/1 (April 1968): 42–52, here 43–4.

<sup>52</sup> Vickers, ‘Leisure and idleness,’ 15; J.-M. André, *L’otium dans la vie morale et intellectuelle romaine des origines à l’époque augustéenne* (Paris, 1966), 381.

<sup>53</sup> Cassian, *De institutis coenobiorum*, X, 21; Vickers, ‘Leisure and idleness,’ 108; Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 19–22; Wenzel, ‘Petrarch’s *Accidia*,’ 39–40.

<sup>54</sup> St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, II, 13; St. Benedict, *Regula*, 48; quoted in Vickers, ‘Leisure and idleness,’ 108.

distinction between the two types of *otium*, while clearly informed by classical thought, also betrays hints of later influences. It is interesting to note, for example, that in distinguishing between the *otium otiosum* and the *otium negotiosum* in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Ratio employs St. Augustine's contrast between *utor* and *fruor*,<sup>55</sup> while in the *Secretum*, Augustinus' discussion of productive leisure integrates allusions to Horace and Ovid into a broader treatment of self-knowledge and the *meditatio mortis*.

### 3. *The Object of Otium and the Notion of Respite in the De Otio Religioso*

As in the *Secretum* and the *Invective contra medicum*, Petrarch examines *otium* as a component of the virtuous life in the *De otio religioso* and similarly presents it as a freedom from worldly desires. Unlike the other texts, however, the *De otio religioso* considers the concept in relation to the acquisition of knowledge essential for salvation. Having explained his intentions, Petrarch takes as his text for the tract a line from *Ps.* 45: 'vacate et videte quoniam ego sum Deus'—'have leisure and see that I am God.'<sup>56</sup> Although this can be understood as a description of the relationship between peace in this world and the next,<sup>57</sup> Petrarch wished it to be understood in a more sophisticated, but not unrelated fashion. For Petrarch, 'videte' could be viewed as a synonym for 'noscete' and hence the verse referred to the knowledge of God which merited the *vera felicitas*. Accordingly, Petrarch read 'vacate et videte' both as an indication that *vacatio* should have salvation as its object,<sup>58</sup> and also as a recognition that *vacatio*—properly exercised—was inextricably bound up with the acquisition of the knowledge which was essential for salvation.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> On this distinction, see St. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, I, 7–10; O. O'Donovan, 'Usus and fruitio in Augustine *De Doctrina Christiana* I,' *Journal of Theological Studies* 33 (1982): 361–97; W. R. O'Connor, 'The uti/frui Distinction in Augustine's Ethics,' *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983): 45–62.

<sup>56</sup> *De otio*, I, 1: 'Unde vero nunc ordinar, seu quid primum semiabsens dicam, nisi quod totus presens dicere volui, illud nempe daviticum: "Vacate et videte," quod, ut nostis, in psalmo quarto et quadragesimo regius propheta et propheticus ille rex posuit?'; Rotondi, 2, ll. 23–6; quoting *Ps.* 45: 11.

<sup>57</sup> *De otio*, I, 1; Rotondi, 4, ll. 23–4.

<sup>58</sup> *De otio*, I, 1; Rotondi, 2, ll. 26–9.

<sup>59</sup> *De otio*, I, 1; Rotondi, 4, ll. 24–26; cf. Augustine, *De vera religione*, liii, 103, quoting I *Cor.* 13:9–10.

Petrarch's exegesis of *Ps.* 45:11—in which *vacatio* is used as the direct equivalent of *otium*—accords *otium* the same function as in the *Secretum* and the *Invective contra medicum*. To achieve *otium* is to recognise in God the one source of *felicitas*, and to apprehend that knowledge which is necessary for salvation. In Petrarch's more prosaic terms, a man should

have leisure, for in having leisure, you will be at peace, and in being at peace, you will see [i.e., know], and in seeing you will rejoice, and indeed 'in rejoicing about the truth' you will be happy. There is no happiness more certain or more sublime.<sup>60</sup>

That man was capable of knowing God, Petrarch had no doubt. Not only was it perfectly possible for any human being to recognise in God the source of his salvation, but it was also feasible for a man to know God, even though his faculties were imperfect. Although no man is able to see God in the same way as the Apostles did, Petrarch explained that we can 'see' God 'in the work of His miracles, unless we close our eyes.'<sup>61</sup> The triumph of Christianity over heresy and the destruction of false idols are a demonstration of God's unlimited mercy.<sup>62</sup> Just as His will can be seen in the course of history, so His mercy could be accessed by all men. Evoking the spirit of St. Augustine's doctrine of divine illumination, Petrarch argued that there is an 'internal light' which allows devoted souls to see Christ always in their minds with a form of 'spiritual vision'.<sup>63</sup>

Despite this, however, Petrarch was conscious that there were obstacles to happiness. Implicit in his exegesis is a recognition of human fallibility

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<sup>60</sup> *De otio*, I, 1: 'Vacate ergo, nam vacando utique quiescetis, quiescendoque videbitis, videndoque gaudebitis, "gaudendo" autem "de veritate" felices eritis; qua nulla certior felicitas, nulla sublimior.'; Rotondi, 5, ll. 22–5, quoting I *Cor.* 13:6. The quotation from this chapter of I *Cor.* when following an argument so similar to that of the *De vera religione* does seem to raise the question of whether Petrarch intended to remain so close to St. Augustine at this point.

<sup>61</sup> *De otio*, I, 5: 'Cristum in carne non vidimus eo modo quo apostolis est visus, quamvis eum in operibus mirabilium suorum, nisi oculos claudimus, assidue videamus.'; Rotondi, 32, ll. 4–6.

<sup>62</sup> *De otio*, I, 5; Rotondi, 32, ll. 25–30. Earlier in the chapter, Petrarch (I, 5; Rotondi, 31, ll. 11–16) quotes Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, XVIII, 53 in support of the view that God's hand could be seen behind the turning of the world towards Christ.

<sup>63</sup> *De otio*, I, 5: 'Nobis vero iam, gratis illi qui usqueadeo immeritos nos dilexit, hec omnia sine ullis externis testibus clara sunt et ita se oculis fidelium divine lucis radii infundunt, ut nemo tam cecus sit qui non "iustitie solem" Cristum mente perspiciat; et quamvis ab ipsa veritate verissimum dictum sit "Beati oculi qui vident que vos videtis," ego tamen hanc ipsam interni luminis claritatem, qua post Cristi reditum ad celos et nunc et usque in finem seculi devote anime non carneis oculis sed spiritus acie Cristum videbunt, illi corporee visioni quadam ex parte non imparem demonstrabo.'; Rotondi, 29, ll. 12–21.



and throughout the *De otio*, Petrarch bemoaned a range of flaws. He concentrates, however, on humanity's capacity for self-deceit and distraction. Citing St. Ambrose as his authority, he wrote that

the journey of life is beset by an unforeseen infestation of demons or a multitude of thieves, with whom invisible subverters of souls prepare fearful traps on all paths for the deaths of innumerable people.<sup>64</sup>

These 'demons', 'thieves' and *supplantores inuisi* are the falsehoods which could entice the unwary away from the path of true knowledge. Elaborating further on their identity, Petrarch urged the monks of Montrieux to resist the 'impious devices' of such 'enemies' and warns them to be particularly wary of

the three varieties of the enemies' weapons: the snares of the world, the lures of the flesh and the wiles of demons. The first promises the most useless of things, the second flatters as a familiar, and the third whispers dreadful counsel to mortals... the world fools you, the flesh appeases you, demons drive you on: from the first, you have no hope; from the second, you have no pleasure; from the third, you have no guidance. All conspire equally for your destruction and death.<sup>65</sup>

If a person is to attain to the knowledge necessary for salvation, he must necessarily avoid these weapons of falsehood. Insofar as *otium* is—as *Ps.* 45:11 suggests—a predicate of knowledge, it is evident that Petrarch intended it to be at least in part a form of 'leisure' from such falsehoods.<sup>66</sup> To possess a *vacatio a mendacibus* was to possess the peace which was necessary to 'see' the divine truth clearly by the 'inner light' of the soul.

Petrarch's preliminary description of *otium* places it, as in the *Secretum* and the *Invective contra medicum*, between virtue and vice. Its position, however, is more specific than in either of the other texts. Developing a theme latent in the *Secretum*, Petrarch begins to define *otium* in stark opposition to the absence of hope, and to the illusory pleasures of the

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<sup>64</sup> *De otio*, 1, 3: 'Quando, ut ait Ambrosius, iter vite occulta demonum infestatio vel latro-num obsidet multitudo, quibus per omnes vias supplantatores inuisi animarum laqueos tendunt innumerabilium mortibus expavescendos...'; Rotondi, 18, ll. 16–19. It is unclear which of St. Ambrose's writings Petrarch had in mind in this passage.

<sup>65</sup> *De otio*, I, 3: 'Occurrite paratibus impiis et vitate tria in primis hostium atque armorum genera, mundi laqueos, carnis illecebras, demonum dolos. Ille vanissima spondet, hec familiariter blanditur, illi autem pessima consilia mortalibus insurrant... Mundus fallit, mulcet caro, demones impellunt: nulla vobis inde spes, nulla hinc voluptas, nullum inde consilium: omnes pariter vestram in perniciem mortemque conspirant.'; Rotondi, 15, l. 28–p. 16, l. 2.

<sup>66</sup> e.g. *De otio*, I, 3; Rotondi, 16, ll. 10–12, quoting *John*, 8:44; cf. Dante, *Inferno*, xxiii, 144.



world. It is, he indicates, bound up with the perception of the divine truth and entails the negation of the 'wiles of demons', the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh'. Whereas in the *Secretum*, *otium* is discussed in the context of an enumeration of the seven deadly sins, in the *De otio religioso*, it is considered as a response to the traditional scheme of the Three Enemies of Man, which had become a commonplace in moral literature following the ascetic impulses in monasticism which had arisen since the tenth century. Indeed, Petrarch's description of the Three Enemies closely mimics those given by St. Bernard and Hugh of St. Victor and, while the implied grouping of the seven deadly sins into these three categories allows a parallel with the *Secretum* to be maintained, it is clear that he intended to define *otium* in relation to a conventional monastic conception of vice and the threats to divine knowledge.

There are four particularly striking points about Petrarch's introduction to the subject of *otium* which deserve to be emphasised at this point. First, *otium* is described as a respite from worldliness, veniality, and sin, and is cast in terms of the acquisition of knowledge in pursuit of virtue. As such, it immediately (although obliquely) calls to mind the issues around which the *Secretum* was framed. Second, Petrarch not only demonstrates his awareness of monastic thought of the Middle Ages, but also consciously makes use of some of its most familiar images and precepts in describing the challenges which *otium* is intended to confront. Third, the medieval notion of the Three Enemies of Man is employed more as a language of moral exposition than as the primary source of substantive argumentation; despite the stress which he places on the 'wiles of demons', the 'snares of the world', and the 'lures of the flesh', Petrarch seems to have kept the theology of St. Augustine uppermost in his mind in outlining the terms of his discussion. Not only is the identification of *vacatio* with divine knowledge evocative of the *De vera religione*, but Petrarch's treatment of 'spiritual vision' also appears to be a conscious appeal to Augustine's doctrine of divine illumination. Moreover, as we shall see later, the manner in which Petrarch employs *Ps.* 45:11 as the text for his treatise is both reminiscent of St. Augustine exegesis in the *Enarrationes in psalmos*, and a subtle, but telling, indication of the Augustinian terms in which he was thinking. Finally, the fact that Petrarch frames his opening chapters around the acquisition of divine knowledge and the threats to understanding seems to place the *De otio religioso* at some remove from the questions which later humanistic treatises were intended to address. On the one hand, the stress placed on knowledge stands in stark contrast to the emphasis laid on the will, in, for example, Salutati's *De seculo et*

*religione*. On the other hand, Petrarch displays a marked lack of concern with the distinction between the secular and religious lives in the opening chapters of his work, and as such, seems to be working from within a rather different heuristic to figures such as Salutati, Valla, and Traversari. Although we will have cause to return to this issue at a later stage, it is worth observing that this apparent divergence is not unrelated to their different attitudes towards knowledge and will, and, by extension, to the different manners in which they understood St. Augustine's theology.

Petrarch's initial treatment of the theme is, however, only very lightly sketched and it is unclear whether *otium* entailed the 'active' intellectual negation of competing thoughts and desires, or required a more physical form of peace from external stimuli. In order to establish the identity of *otium* with greater precision, it is necessary to look more closely at the manner in which Petrarch's *otium* constituted a respite from the 'snares of the world', the 'lures of the flesh' and the 'wiles of demons' which together threatened the perception of truth.

#### 4. *Otium as a Respite from the 'Wiles of Demons'*

Petrarch's first concern is with the threat posed by 'demons'. Throughout the first book of the *De otio*, these 'demons' are described in the manner of St. Augustine.<sup>67</sup> Peddlers in deceit, they are portrayed as *mediators* always anxious to seduce a man away from the truth. Perhaps recalling the temptation of Christ, Petrarch suggests that 'demons' endeavour constantly to erode man's belief in his capacity to redeem himself.<sup>68</sup> Although the coming of Christ and of Christianity had struck fear into Satan's heart,<sup>69</sup> that 'sly old spirit' would never cease trying to obstruct those striving for salvation and would continue to put doubt in the way of faith.<sup>70</sup>

In describing the 'demons', Petrarch's wording is deliberately cautious. It is not that the Devil and his minions delude men into doubting that God is merciful, but rather that the satanic hordes cause human beings to doubt their own capacity for redemption.<sup>71</sup> In an awkwardly worded

<sup>67</sup> Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, IX, 18 describes *daemones* as 'falsi autem fallacesque mediatores'. Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 163.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. *Matt.* 4:9.

<sup>69</sup> *De otio*, I, 5; Rotondi, 32, l. 35–33, l. 4, quoting Lactantius, *Div. Inst.*, I, 9.

<sup>70</sup> *De otio*, I, 3; Rotondi, 21, ll. 1–4.

<sup>71</sup> Petrarch accepts that there are many people who deny that in the person of Christ, God provided man with the facility to merit salvation and specifically mentions the Jews,

passage, Petrarch argues that while God has provided man with every opportunity to redeem himself, and while it is possible for man to 'see' Christ,

this matter is in doubt for many people, [because] there is such a cloud of suspicions, such a dizziness of minds and such torpid diffidence. This is not because anyone entirely doubts the power of God—unless he is mad—but because man distrusts his own merit and does not dare wish or hope for as much as he sees freely granted to him without his having asked and therefore, comparing the magnitude of the heavenly blessing with his own unworthiness, he begins to ask himself whether his happiness is real, or whether he is deceived by an illusion and as it were some blessed dream—as if human merit had any part in this and it were not wholly by God's mercy not only that we are fortunate, but that we are.<sup>72</sup>

While a man may believe in Christ, in other words, he might still doubt his capacity to tread the path that had been revealed to him.

As suggested by his earlier assertion that they remove hope, Petrarch's 'demons' correspond to the malady of despair. Seduced into the traps of the satanic hordes, a man may feel that he is unable to do anything, despite the fact that God had created the opportunity for humankind to redeem itself. Consumed with a false sense of powerlessness, he succumbs

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Muslims, Averroists, Manicheans, and Arians as 'enemies' of the truth in this respect. However, Petrarch's primary concern in this section of the tract is with *Christian* doubters: those who believe in Christ as redeemer, but who doubt their own capacity to achieve salvation. *De otio*, I, 4; Rotondi, 23, l. 2–24, l. 11. These examples of the 'enemies' of truth are not randomly chosen: the Jews and Muslims actively denied Christ's divinity, and the Arians were generally accepted to deny the same, while the Manicheans conceived of Christ as 'a manifestation of the Saving Intellect or *Nous*'; Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo*, 161. The Latin Averroists of Petrarch's day believed that man could achieve salvation merely through the application of his intellect and, at the least, gave the impression of seriously undervaluing the role of Christ. For a useful introduction to Latin Averroism, see S. Ebbesen, 'The Paris arts faculty: Siger of Brabant, Boethius of Dacia, Radulphus Brito,' in *Routledge History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, *Medieval Philosophy*, ed. J. Marenbon (London, 1998), 269–90. On Siger of Brabant, see, for example, E. P. Mahoney, 'Sense, intellect and imagination in Albert, Thomas and Siger,' in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. N. Kretzmann, A. Kenny, and J. Pinborg (Cambridge, 1982), 611–22.

<sup>72</sup> *De otio*, I, 5: 'Que licet ita sint ut diximus, multis tamen adhuc res in dubium redit, tanta suspicionum nubes, tanta vertigo mentium, tantus diffidentie torpor inest; non quia de potentia Dei quisquam omnino, nisi amens, dubitet, sed quia de suo merito diffidit homo neque tantum vel optare audeat vel sperare, quantum sibi ultro videt impensum, ideoque magnitudinem beneficii celestis cum indignitate sua conferens hesitare incipit secumque disquirere vera ne felicitas sua sit, an prestigio et velut beato quodam somnio eludatur, quasi ille prorsus in hoc humani meriti partes sint et non totum misericordie Dei sit, non modo quod felices sumus, sed quod sumus.'; Rotondi, 33, l. 31–34, l. 4.

to despair.<sup>73</sup> This has a very obvious parallel in Franciscus' *accidia* in the *Secretum*. Knocked back by *fortuna*, Franciscus found himself despairing of the possibility of happiness, despite his apparent acceptance of God's mercy, and was paralysed by his *accidia*.<sup>74</sup>

But Petrarch's 'demons' also have broader resonance. The use of the image to denote despair is consonant with an iconographical and theological tradition stretching from the desert fathers to the fourteenth century. Developing a theme in early Christian demonology, Evagrius, for example, spoke frequently of the 'demon of ἀχθidia' and 'the spirit of ἀχθidia'.<sup>75</sup> The assaults of demons plagued the monk with particular vigour at noon and, filling him with a hatred for everything, induced despair and the desire to quit the ascetic life. Later, Isidore of Seville described despair as a trick used by the Devil,<sup>76</sup> and from at least the fourteenth century onwards, the idea of *accidia* or *tristitia* as a weapon of demons recurs often, as, for instance, in *The Cloud of Unknowing* and the English treatise, *Agayne Despayre*.<sup>77</sup> Within the scheme of the Three Enemies of Man, *acedia* was accorded a variety of roles, but during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, it was commonly defined as a temptation of the Devil, and notable examples can be found in the sermons of Jacques de Vitry, Robert Grosseteste's *Templum domini*, and Jean de Journi's *La Dime de penitance*, as well as in the *Cursor mundi* and the *Speculum morale*.<sup>78</sup>

The inclusion of despair in discussions of *otium* was, moreover, not uncommon. Unproductive leisure—the *otium otiosum*—was causally connected with melancholy and spiritual sloth in monastic literature. Indeed, as Brian Vickers has observed, '[o]nce the seven deadly sins had been codified as an entity for homiletics it was inevitable that *otium*, being already equated with *pigritia*, *ignavia* and *desidia*, should be subsumed under *acedia*'.<sup>79</sup> Following the example of John Cassian and Gregory the Great, theologians from the thirteenth century onwards customarily included

<sup>73</sup> *De otio*, I, 6; Rotondi, 37, ll. 12–24, quoting *Hab.* 3:2.

<sup>74</sup> E.g. *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 106–8.

<sup>75</sup> Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 12. See also J. Daniélou, 'Démon II—Dans la littérature ecclésiastique jusqu'à Origène,' in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité ascétique et mystique* (Paris, 1957), 3: 152–89.

<sup>76</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Senentiarum libri III*, II, 14, 3; quoted in S. Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God: Despair in Medieval and Renaissance Tradition,' *Studies in the Renaissance* 12 (1965): 18–59, here 23.

<sup>77</sup> *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counselling*, ed. P. Hodgson (London, 1944), 84; *Agayne Despayre*, MS London B.L. Add. 37049, fol. 92v.; quoted in Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God,' 23, 38.

<sup>78</sup> Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 167.

<sup>79</sup> Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness,' 108.

*otium* or *otiositas* among the progeny of *acedia*, and unproductive leisure appears prominently in Alvarus Pelagius' fourteenth-century description of the branches of *acedia* alongside *negligentia*, *tarditas*, *indevotio*, *tristitia*, and *tedium vite*, amongst others.<sup>80</sup>

Beginning with Cassian, this association between *otium* and *acedia* served as the basis for recommending a productive leisure—*otium negotium*—which entailed labour, primarily in a monastic setting.<sup>81</sup> Connected with the proverbial image of the slothful man placing his hand in his bosom, the pairing *otiosus*–*acedia* was to be remedied by physical labour, or work with the hands.<sup>82</sup> In placing productive *otium* in opposition to *acedia*, Petrarch participated in the spirit of this tradition, but in the context of the tension he identified between the 'wiles of demons' and the perception of divine knowledge, he appears to be closer to the thought of the desert fathers, and seems almost to have Latinised the positive meaning attached to the Greek term ἀπάθεια. Brought into Christian moral theology from Greek Stoicism by Clement of Alexandria, the term came to be associated with a freedom from the passions (πάθη), the use of reason and the attainment of divine knowledge.<sup>83</sup> For the desert fathers, the object of ἀπάθεια was a form of peace (ἡσυχία) in which πάθη were kept under the sway of reason.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, with demonic ἄχθidia in mind, Evagrius wrote that '[t]he Kingdom of Heaven is the ἀπάθεια of the soul, with a true knowledge of the things that exist.'<sup>85</sup>

Petrarch was confident that the danger posed by 'demons' could be remedied. Towards the end of the first book of the *De otio religioso*, *otium* becomes a solution to despair. Rather than being a form of manual labour, however, it was an active leisure which recalls the slothful to their capacity for redemption, and restores the grounds for hope. At several points in the text, Petrarch stresses that in the face of numerous deceptions, it is essential neither to forget God's limitless power and mercy, nor to lose hope.<sup>86</sup> Being able to do anything, God has also done everything to facilitate the salvation of mankind and it is this particular fact which in Petrarch's view must be recalled.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Wenzel, 'Petrarch's *accidia*,' 41.

<sup>81</sup> Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness,' 110.

<sup>82</sup> *Prov.* 19:24; 26:15; Vickers, 'Leisure and Idleness,' 110; Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 122–5.

<sup>83</sup> Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 13.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted at Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 14.

<sup>86</sup> *De otio*, I, 4; Rotondi, 25, ll. 19–22; 26, l. 5.

<sup>87</sup> *De otio*, I, 4; Rotondi, 26, ll. 26–32.

The recollection which Petrarch recommends relies for its effectiveness on the value of reading and meditation. Satan's 'deceitful language'<sup>88</sup> can most effectively be resisted with the 'sharp arrows of a powerful [God] together with the coals of desolation.'<sup>89</sup> The 'sharp arrows' and the 'coals of desolation' need to be distinguished.

The 'sharp arrows' are 'the Apostles and their messages' and they constitute Petrarch's primary solution to doubt and despair.<sup>90</sup> A close reading of Scripture and a sincere contemplation of the meaning of the Apostles' words can, Petrarch argues, help the despairing believer to understand more fully the fallacy of his doubt and the extent of God's power. Confronted with Satan's 'deceitful language'

You will turn to the divine counsels and arm yourself with the words of Christ himself. For you will hear foretold by Him the troubles, labours, dangers and scandals of this life and whatever you must endure in this span of time. From the opposite side, you will hear [about] the rewards of a better life and the consolations promised to those who work to the end. This is given to you and stands opposed to a deceitful tongue.<sup>91</sup>

The words of God, which foretell the hardships of this life, provide a true heuristic for understanding man's position in this world, while the act of reading itself is less significant than the internalisation of the message.

Should a man still have doubt, however, Petrarch advises him to have recourse to the 'coals of desolation'.<sup>92</sup> Addressing the monks of Montrieux, he explains that this term—which perhaps evokes the spiritual language

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<sup>88</sup> The notion of a *lingua dolosa* being in tension with a devotion to God was a lexical commonplace of medieval spirituality.

<sup>89</sup> *De otio*, I, 7: 'Inde igitur talia suadente illo, quid detur aut quid apponatur nobis ad linguam dolosam? Si hoc queritis respondetur vobis per prophetam: "Sagitte potentis acute cum carbonibus desolatoriis"; Rotondi, 45, ll. 10–12, quoting *Ps.* 119:4.

<sup>90</sup> *De otio*, I, 7: 'Sagittas vero quas alias opinemur, nisi apostolos ac nuntios, quos potens ille de quo loquimur in medium suorum hostium iaculatus est, seu verba vite et testimonia Evangelii late sparsa et sive per illos, sive per seipsum regum ac populorum infixata sunt pectoribus, non doloris asperi, sed predulcis amoris causativo vulnere, de quibus ipse non semel sed iterum et iterum gloriabundus et exultans dicit: "In nomine Domini quia ultus sum in eos"; Rotondi, 46, ll. 10–17, quoting *Ps.* 117:10–12.

<sup>91</sup> *De otio*, I, 8: 'Ad divina deinde consilia te convertes teque ipsius Cristi verbis armabis. Audies enim ab illo prenuntiatas huius vite molestias et labores et pericula et scandala et quicquid in hoc cursu temporum tibi patiendum est. Audies ab adverso melioris vite premia atque solatia in finem promissa laborantibus. Hoc tibi datur et apponitur ad linguam dolosam.'; Rotondi, 47, ll. 23–28.

<sup>92</sup> *De otio*, I, 8: '... quotiens istis urgemini, fratres, neque ad defensionem verba neque acute sufficiunt sagitte, tum demum carbonibus desolatorii in medium proferantur...'; Rotondi, 48, ll. 1–3.

of St. John of the Cross—is the example provided by ‘ardent and burning souls of those who have preceded you in this holy endeavour.’<sup>93</sup> While maintaining a sincere admiration for the achievements of the saints, Petrarch invites the monks to consider whether they were any weaker than these holy men and women.<sup>94</sup> Reading the lives or writings of saints can, he suggests, help a person to recognise that his humanity need be no bar to the most holy of virtues and can give the despairing greater strength in their pursuit of God. The act of reading was, in this case, secondary to the process of experiential identification.<sup>95</sup>

The ‘sharp arrows’ and the ‘coals of desolation’ provide an intriguing insight into the nature of *otium* in relation to doubt and despair. Placed between *virtus* and despair, *otium* can be understood in two ways. At one level, the concept appears to be relatively straightforward. Petrarch recognises in ‘demons’ a threat to the apprehension of truth, and calls upon the monks of Montrieux to ‘manage’ their leisure in such a way that they may yet ascend to eternal rest.<sup>96</sup> This ‘management’ of leisure must necessarily involve the setting aside of time for reading. In this sense, Petrarch’s understanding of *otium* is fairly conventional and seems to correspond both to the emphasis on study in most monastic rules, and to the artistic tradition of representing the reading of holy books as a defence against the wiles of demons in the late Middle Ages, itself a continuation of the iconographical connection between demonic temptation and despair.<sup>97</sup> The reading of Holy Scripture was, for example, explicitly recommended as a response to *acedia* by Alvarus Peraldus in his *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus*.<sup>98</sup> As we have seen, however, Petrarch’s treatment of reading as a response to doubt and despair had a more subtle dimension. Despite

<sup>93</sup> *De otio*, I, 8: ‘carbones vero desolatorios seu vastatores, utrunque enim in antiquis codicibus lectum est, quid aliud putem, nisi ardentis et ignitis animas eorum, qui vos in hoc sancto proposito precesserunt?’, Rotondi, 46, ll. 19–22.

<sup>94</sup> *De otio*, I, 8; Rotondi, 48, ll. 3–8.

<sup>95</sup> It is perhaps possible to observe a parallel in the position of the reader in the *Secretum*: q.v. Kahn, ‘The Figure of the Reader’; Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 134–6, 145–7, 182–216. Cf. Petrarch on identification with St. Augustine, *Sen.* VI, 9.

<sup>96</sup> *De otio*, I, 7; Rotondi, 43, ll. 21–27.

<sup>97</sup> In an illustration by Jean Fouquet for the *Heures d’Etienne Chevalier* (c.1450–60), for example, St. Bernard is depicted being tempted by the deceits of a hideous winged demon. Visibly rejecting the demon’s wiles, St. Bernard remains dedicated to the study of an unknown book at his reading desk. For the development of this view during the Renaissance, see T. Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca, 1990).

<sup>98</sup> Alvarus Peraldus, *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus*, V, 1, 2; cited in Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 195.



the vividness of his imagery, demons were for Petrarch never anything more than a convenient emblem for an intellectual infelicity, a cipher for the obstruction doubt and despair posed to the perception of truth. The remedy which he prescribes is similarly intellectual. Rather than the act of reading itself acquiring any intrinsic meaning, it is the associated intellectual processes of inculcation and identification which serve to combat the reader's doubt and despair. As a result, this component of Petrarch's *otium* acquires a more interior meaning than might initially appear. Indisputably an *otium* whose object is the apprehension of a higher truth, it involves the negation of mental obstructions. Its operative component, although rooted in the physical activity of reading, is ultimately an intellectual exercise. Through an absorption of Scripture, a man may place himself in relation both to the world and to the eternal; by identifying himself with the humanity of the saints, he may comprehend and trust his capacity to transcend the mortal and merit the *vera felicitas* of the next life. In that he placed emphasis on experiential identification as a prelude to virtue, Petrarch appears to pre-empt trends in later humanistic attitudes towards the writing and reading of saints' lives. Examining the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste as an inspirational model for the troops of Alfonso V of Aragon, Lorenzo Valla implicitly recognised that it was the authentic and human reality of these pre-Constantinian martyrs which allowed them to be fully imitable models.<sup>99</sup> So too, for Raffaele Maffei, the benefit of reading saints' lives lay in the reader's capacity to identify themselves with real—and occasionally flawed—exemplars of virtue.<sup>100</sup> Proposing early Christian saints as models for imitation by secular figures, Tommaso d'Arezzo and Antonio degli Agli not merely achieved a 'broadening of the religious vision' comparable to Petrarch's own enterprise, but also relied on experiential identification to achieve this end in the same way as Petrarch employed the same method in the *De otio religioso*.<sup>101</sup>

##### 5. *Otium as a Respite from the 'Snares of the World' and the 'Lures of the Flesh'*

The impression that Petrarch's *otium* was conceived as an interior leisure which was not essentially connected to the influence of physical

<sup>99</sup> A. Knowles Frazier, *Possible Lives. Authors and Saints in Renaissance Italy* (New York, 2005), 61–4, 96–7.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 307–20.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 96–7.

circumstances, but which was built on the active removal of intellectual obstacles is repeated when he turned to consider *otium* as a response to the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh'.<sup>102</sup>

Petrarch's description of the nature and negation of the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' is highly involved and frequently repetitious. His explanation of the manner in which these temptations threatened virtue, however, is relatively simple, and it quickly becomes clear that, like the 'demons' of the first book, they are products of the agent's mind rather than the result of physical contact.

As in the *Secretum*, Petrarch considered the desire for corporeal things to be a submission to the fleeting and the ephemeral. Wealth, glory and renown captivate men, but are nevertheless insubstantial and unenduring. All worldly things change and the high prizes so earnestly sought are ultimately lost through death.<sup>103</sup> The fine tombs of great men finally contain nothing but ashes, snakes and worms.<sup>104</sup> Evoking Heraclitus' notion of flux elsewhere, Petrarch felt that it was foolish to seek happiness in fleeting things.<sup>105</sup> It was, however, the contrast between the transience of the temporal and the permanence of the eternal which shaped his criticism most significantly. In looking at the shifting world around him, the ambitious man loses sight of the one true happiness, and of the virtue which will carry his immortal soul to heaven. In a powerful lament, Petrarch exclaims

The sum of all things returns to nothing, and [still], o, the madness, o, the blindness! With so much enthusiasm do [men] accumulate perishable riches and how great is the care for property which will neither endure nor follow us: the virtue that will accompany [us] to the end and that will carry [us] to Heaven is neglected.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> In the second book of the *De otio religioso*, the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' are formally separate subjects but, as Roland Witt has observed in his introduction to Susan Shearer's translation, the two topics are so closely related and so tightly intertwined that it is almost meaningless to attempt to consider them as distinct strands of argumentation. In terms of the obstruction they pose to *otium* and the attainment of the *vera felicitas*, they are in every sense identical. R. G. Witt, 'Introduction' to Petrarch, *On Religious Leisure*, ed. and trans. Schearer, ix–xxii, here xviii.

<sup>103</sup> *De otio*, II, 1; Rotondi, 62, ll. 16–29; 63, ll. 10–11.

<sup>104</sup> *De otio*, II, 1; Rotondi, 62, ll. 16–25, quoting Virgil, *Aen.* VI, 848. Also *De otio*, II, 1; Rotondi, 63, ll. 10–11.

<sup>105</sup> *De otio*, II, 1; Rotondi, 59, ll. 23–6, quoting Seneca, *Ep.* lviii, 23.

<sup>106</sup> *De otio*, II, 1: 'Summa omnium in nichilum redit, et, o furor, o cecitas! Cum tanto studio periture divitie cumulentur, tanta non mansure neque nos secutur rei familiaris sit cura mortalibus, virtus comitatura in finem et ad superos pervectura negligitur.'; Rotondi, 55, ll. 15–19.

Forgetting that he is the recipient of God's grace, the man who devotes himself to the 'instruments of mortal fame' makes himself 'like the foolish beasts of burden', and forsakes his own unique capacity for redemption.<sup>107</sup> Referring to the *Aeneid*, Petrarch asserted that those who are seduced by temporal snares and lures seem to have drawn something from each of the rivers of Tartarus. 'They seem,' he wrote,

freely to have drawn a forgetfulness of one's better nature from the Lethe, a ferment of anger and desires from the Phlegethon, a fruitless penitence and grief from the Acheron, sorrow and tears from the Cocytus and enmity and hatred from the Styx.<sup>108</sup>

Petrarch explains that this 'forgetfulness of one's better nature' should be equated with an abandonment of the divine gift of reason. 'Desire,' he contended,

commands not only that God, who may not be observed except with the most pure eyes, cannot be seen, but [also] that there is no place within for reason or, as a logical consequence, for humanity (*humanitati*), which can neither exist nor be understood without reason. [I]ndeed, the character of the man having been stripped away, the mind is made savage and arrives at such misery that he turns the most splendid gift of God—the reason [that is] sent from Heaven—to the dark and foul indulgence of desires, 'like the horse and the mule, in whom there is no understanding.'<sup>109</sup>

As Petrarch had explained in the previous chapter using the rivers of Babylon as a point of comparison, those who take pleasure in the 'errors, instabilities and flight of temporal things' are swept far away from the 'regal city' in which salvation lies.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>107</sup> *De otio*, II, 1: '...audivimus instrumenta fame mortalis: sepulcra domos, posteritatis memoriam et aliam quamlibet perituri nominis claritatem. Que omnia cum supervacui laboris atque amentie plena sint, nostis quam mordax insipientie bestialis exprobatio sequitur et eodem psalmo ad exaggerationem insanie iteratur: "Homo cum in honore esset non intellexit, comparatus est iumentis insipientibus et similis factus est illis"; Rotondi, 57, ll. 8–14; quoting *Ps.* 48:13.

<sup>108</sup> *De otio*, II, 1: '...de Lethe oblivionem nature melioris, de Flegetonte irarum estus atque cupidinum, de Acheronte infructuosas penitentiam et dolorem, de Cocito luctus ac lacrimas, de Stige inimicitias atque odia largiter hausisse videantur...'; Rotondi, 58, ll. 24–7.

<sup>109</sup> *De otio*, II, 2: '...libido imperat non modo Deum non videri, qui nisi purgatissimis oculis non videtur... sed nullum penitus rationi esse locum consequenterque nec humanitati, que sine ratione nec esse potest nec intelligi, exui quippe mores hominis efferarique animum eoque miseriarum pervenire ut preclarissimum Dei donum rationem celitus datam sibi,... "sicut equus et mulus quibus non est intellectus" ad obscurum et turpe libidinum vertat obsequium [...]'; Rotondi, 71, ll. 5–6, 7–12, quoting *Ps.* 31:9.

<sup>110</sup> *De otio*, II, 1: 'Hec sunt flumina Babilonis quorum meminit Scriptura, videlicet lapsus, instabilitas et fuga rerum temporalium ad Babilonis ius spectantium, non civitatis regis

Petrarch's description of the danger posed by the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' to some degree complements his earlier use of 'demons' to denote despair and his suggestion in other texts that unproductive leisure was the gateway to vice. Placed in opposition to the *otium negotiosum* which Petrarch sought to recommend, the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' are implicitly tied to the *otium otiosum*. Idleness is thus tied to sinfulness just as closely as it is to despair. This is, of course, consonant with the *Secretum*, in which *accidia* is discussed in relation to Franciscus' vices, but also has analogues in the association of *otiositas*, *acedia* and sin in medieval and patristic literature and is intrinsic to the scheme of the Three Enemies of Man. Commonly paired with the *otium otiosum* or *otiositas*, *acedia* was for the duration of the medieval period 'almost always found only in connection with the other capital sins, whether in a mere enumeration or in more extensive treatments.'<sup>111</sup> Indeed, there was often a clear causal relation between unproductive *otium*, sinfulness and despair. In the Vulgate, St. Jerome used *otium* to connote the idleness from which vice sprang,<sup>112</sup> while despair was later seen as the 'last stage in a life of sin'<sup>113</sup> and appears as the product of habitual sin in the works of St. Gregory the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas.<sup>114</sup> Idleness with regard to virtue led to sinfulness, and to despair. All, moreover, are associated with a preference for the world over God and, in later literature, were often rectified with reference to the *ars moriendi*.<sup>115</sup>

The precise terms in which Petrarch describes the opposition of the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' to virtue are important for

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cuius incolarum "pedes stantes erant in atriis tuis, Ierusalem" ...'; Rotondi, 58, ll. 16–19, quoting *Ps.* 121:2. It is tempting to suggest that the reference to Babylon is a conscious effort to create a bridge to 'l'empia Babilonia' in *Canz.* 114. The suggestion is recommended by the discussion of the flux of cities a few paragraphs later, which includes a further citation of Babylon, but this time as a specific, emblematic city—*De otio*, II, 1; Rotondi, 60, l. 16ff. It is worth noting that the image of Babylon as 'confusion' is repeated at *Fam.* XV, 9, 16: 'Babilon, hoc est confusio.' On the theme of Babylon in the *Canzoniere* in particular, see Iliescu, *Il Canzoniere Petrarcesco e Sant'Agostino*, 133–140; A. H. Hallock, 'The Pre-Eminent Role of Babilonia in Petrarch's Theme of the Two Cities,' *Italica* 54/2 (Summer): 290–297; A. Lee, 'Sin City? The Image of Babylon in Petrarch's *Canzoniere*,' in *The Idea of the City: Early Modern, Modern and Post-Modern Locations and Communities*, ed. J. Fitzpatrick (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2009), 39–52.

<sup>111</sup> Wenzel, 'Petrarch's *accidia*,' 42.

<sup>112</sup> *Eccles.* 33:29; Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness,' 107.

<sup>113</sup> Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God,' 48.

<sup>114</sup> St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia*, IV, 51; *P.L.* 85, 662–3; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I–II, q. 72, a. 7 ad. 2.

<sup>115</sup> Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God,' 42–3.

our examination of *otium*. Once again, *otium* is placed between *virtus* and *voluptas*, but in a manner which puts it in close relation to self-knowledge and reason. In the opening chapters of the second book of the *De otio religioso*, the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' are presented as inimical to the pursuit of *felicitas* not because physical objects are capable of transmitting vice, but because, in succumbing to his desires, a man forsakes that part of his nature which would allow him to merit salvation. Permitting himself to seek wealth, to covet power, and to wish for empty honours, he forsakes the natural reason which would allow him to recognise the true source of happiness and merit salvation.

Although Petrarch makes passing reference to salutary reading,<sup>116</sup> his solution to the danger posed by the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' focuses on contrasting the fleeting pleasures of this life with the eternal happiness of the next. Death is at the heart of this contrast. Not only does death highlight the ephemeral nature of the objects of men's desires, but it also stands as the point of transition from one sphere of existence to the next, and hence serves as a powerful reminder of the life to come. Using the Delphic injunction to 'know thyself', therefore, Petrarch urges the monks of Montrieux to reflect constantly on their mortality as a means of comprehending how fleeting is worldly existence, and how readily they would be reduced to nothing if they did not abide in God.<sup>117</sup>

If it is to be efficacious, however, the meditation on death must conform to a certain pattern and inspire a particular mode of living. Many people, Petrarch suggests, regard their mortality incorrectly, and their meditation becomes simply an affirmation of their enslavement to the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh'. Petrarch railed against those who entertain an 'empty horror of death' because of their 'imprudent lust for [this] life'.<sup>118</sup> If a man is to meditate properly on the meaning of death, he must recognise that it has a significant bearing on the relationship between the mind and the body, and between reason and desire.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>116</sup> *De otio*, II, 7; Rotondi, 103, ll. 2–10, quoting St. Jerome, *Ep.*, 53, 9.

<sup>117</sup> *De otio*, II, 7; Rotondi, 102, ll. 19–26.

<sup>118</sup> *De otio*, I, 6: '...sileo spes inanes, anxias, infinitas, inexplēbiles, inconsultam vite cupidinem, supervacuum mortis horrorem, luctum precocem, risum tardum, cecitatem anime seipsam nescientis, ridiculam ignorantiam rerum variarum et scientiam laboriosam, magis in dies quid sibi desit agnoscentem et profectu notitiae causas laboris ac doloris et indignationis aggregantem.'; Rotondi, 37, ll. 3–8. Also *De otio*, II, 1; Rotondi, 64, ll. 10–20, quoting Cicero, *Tusc.* I, xxxvi, 86.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Petrarch's allegorical discussion of Aeolus and the winds, *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 122–124.

Although the mind and body are distinct, they are nevertheless linked and frequently pull in different directions.<sup>120</sup> Where the mind or spirit is subjected to the body, a man ultimately only suffers 'corruption and death', but where the body is subjected to the mind, 'sanctity and eternal life' follow.<sup>121</sup> Deliberately emulating St. Bernard, Petrarch argued that the person who appreciates the meaning of death leaves his body behind and lives only as a spirit while on earth. For 'there is,' he says,

that universal platonic idea in the *Phaedro*—'philosophy is nothing other than a meditation on death'—where two deaths are portrayed: the one according to nature, the other for the sake of virtue. They say that the first of these should not be summoned or feared, but awaited with a calm mind; the second should be sought with all enthusiasm. Your [brothers] have made especial use of this type of dying, forgetful of all pleasure and desire, living in the body as if they had already escaped the private prison of its members.<sup>122</sup>

To meditate properly on death, then, is not merely to comprehend the fallacy of temporal desires, but is also to understand the need to live as a pilgrim in the body. This was understood, at least, by Ss. Hilarion, Jerome and Francis, each of whom combated his urges by treating the body as an enemy that had to be beaten into submission.<sup>123</sup> Excising his desires in this manner and subjecting his body to his mind, a man will be able to exercise his natural capacity for reason and, as a result, will come to know the truth. In this way, Petrarch contends, the unobstructed application of reason allows the soul's immortal potential to be realised even though the foulness of the mortal body may remain.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>120</sup> *De otio*, II, 2; Rotondi, 66, ll. 12–16, 22–25, quoting *Rom.* 7:22–23. Cf. *Fam.* II, 5.

<sup>121</sup> *De otio*, II, 2: 'Quis inter hec hesitet, fratres mei? An erubescere malit, an sanctificari? An stipendium peccati mortem eligat an vitam eternam? Quod si in optione horum nemo dubitat, nec in eo dubitare conveniet, an carni an spiritui sit parendum, cum inde corruptio et mors, hinc sanctitas et eterna vita proveniat.'; Rotondi, 68, ll. 26–30.

<sup>122</sup> *De otio*, II, 2: 'Tale demum est universale platonicum illud in *Phedrone* [*sic*], "nil aliud esse philosophiam nisi meditationem moriendi": ubi due designantur mortes, altera nature, virtutis altera; quarum primam nec ullatenus arcessendam nec timendam, sed equo animo expectandam dicunt, secundam vero omni studio appetendam, quo genere moriendi vestri precipue usi sunt, voluptatum et cupidinum omnium obliti, ita viventes in corpore quasi iam membrorum ergastulo evasisissent...'; Rotondi, p.65, ll. 15–21, quoting Plato, *Phaedro*, 67d.

<sup>123</sup> *De otio*, II, 3; Rotondi, 74, ll. 5–16. Petrarch also uses Scipio Africanus' rebuke to Masinissa as an illustration of his point. While the language is striking and the example elegant, Scipio is a less satisfactory example to chose. Although Masinissa was a brave warrior who had achieved many noble things, Scipio quite properly believed that his bigamous marriage to Sophonisba (who was already married to Syphax) undid his other virtues and urged him to control himself. *De otio*, II, 3; Rotondi, 73, ll. 10–76. Cf. *Africa*, V, 418–422.

<sup>124</sup> *De otio*, II, 5; Rotondi, 94, ll. 6–16, quoting Apuleius, *De deo Socratis*, 4.

The impression of *otium* which emerges from this discussion of the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' therefore has two components. It is true that in one sense, Petrarch intended his exhortation to *otium* to serve as a continuation of a literal interpretation of *Ps.* 45:11 and the concept involves a sense that one should 'take time' to combat the dangers of worldly desire. Although this cannot be ignored, however, Petrarch's analysis goes far beyond the literal sense of *vacate* and the 'activity' appropriate to *otium* casts the notion in a definitively intellectual light. Since the remedy for the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' is based on a distinctive form of the *meditatio mortis*, the *otium* which Petrarch describes entails not a literal form of rest, but rather a state of being free from desire, of being free to exercise the reason necessary for salvation. This element of *otium*, bound up with the idea of living as a pilgrim in the body, is very clearly identifiable with an unobstructed intellectual capacity for the rational pursuit of virtue.

#### 6. *All in the Mind: the Sources and Meaning of Otium in the De Otio Religioso*

The preceding analysis has shown that Petrarch's presentation of *otium* in the *De otio religioso* is more subtle than the rather literal English translation of the word might suggest. Conceived as an *otium negotiosum*, it was discussed as a respite from the Three Enemies of Man. It was defined in opposition to a traditional understanding of the 'wiles of demons', the 'lures of the flesh', and the 'snares of the world', and Petrarch's elaboration of the dangers posed by these Three Enemies made extensive use of the imagery found in moral treatises from the desert fathers to the fourteenth century. Firmly rooted in the context of patristic and monastic conceptions of sin and vice, *otium* had as its object the negation of obstacles to the apprehension of truth, and involved not only experiential identification in reading, but also the substitution of reason for desire following a meditation on death.

Petrarch appealed to a wide range of sources in his treatment of *otium*, and it is striking that he consciously attempted to weave the threads of classical, patristic, and medieval moral thought into the same cloth. Indeed, in that he used the distinctive Latin term '*otium*', and associated it with a specific set of productive activities, Petrarch appears to have drawn some inspiration from the rich classical and monastic heritage of this concept and its analogues (*quies*, *vacatio*, etc.). At the level of mere bibliography, it



is apparent that Petrarch was not only well acquainted with key classical and monastic texts on this subject, but was also prepared to exploit the conceptual continuities which linked the two traditions.<sup>125</sup> The first list of Petrarch's preferred reading, assembled several years before the composition of the *De otio religioso*, contained some of the most important works on *otium* by Latin moralists.<sup>126</sup> Cicero's works obviously constituted a significant corpus of information, but it is worth pointing out that the Senecan texts known to Petrarch—notably the *Epistulae morales*, the *De tranquillitate animi*, the *De consolatione ad Polybium*, and the *De brevitate vitae*—presented the concept in a far more systematic fashion. Direct quotations in the *De otio religioso* indicate that Petrarch was certainly prepared to mine this seam, with Cicero's works being named or quoted on no fewer than thirty occasions,<sup>127</sup> and Seneca's writings on a further seven. By the same token, Petrarch was also familiar with the teachings of key figures in the monastic tradition. In addition to referring to a number of important personalities—such as St. Macarius, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Maximus, St. Bruno and St. Bernard—Petrarch cites a range of Christian authorities on *otium*, and leans most heavily on Lactantius—whose *Divinae Institutiones* are frequently presented as a bridge between the classical tradition and later Christian thought<sup>128</sup>—and St. Jerome's letters.<sup>129</sup> From his other writings, it is apparent that he had also familiarised himself at the very least with the works of St. Gregory the Great<sup>130</sup> and St. Bernard<sup>131</sup> before the *De otio religioso* was completed.

The bibliographical evidence is mirrored by conceptual parallels. Like Petrarch, both Latin moralists and Christian theologians were adamant

<sup>125</sup> On the conceptual continuity between the classical and monastic traditions, see J. Leclercq, *Otia monastica: Étude sur le vocabulaire de la contemplation au moyen âge*, Studia Anselmiana 51 (Rome, 1963), 13–62.

<sup>126</sup> Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 117–37; de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, 2:115–25; R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from 1300 to 1850* (Oxford, 1976), 10.

<sup>127</sup> It should, however, be noted that six of Cicero's writings are quoted or cited indirectly on four occasions. In each case, Petrarch quotes from Lactantius, himself quoting from or referring to Cicero: *De otio*, II, 4; Rotondi, 84, ll. 22–5; 86, ll. 14–30; 87, ll. 17–23; 88, ll. 1–6, 11–16.

<sup>128</sup> E.g. *De otio*, I, 4; Rotondi, 28, ll. 6–7; II, 4; Rotondi, 84, l. 4–88, l. 26 (for an extended discussion of Lactantius' view of Cicero).

<sup>129</sup> Trinkaus, 'Humanist treatises', 19: '... even in book I, where the state of life and the conflicts within the monastery walls are the main stress of his sermonizing, he falls back mainly on the classical Christians for support—on Augustine, Lactantius, and Jerome.'

<sup>130</sup> E.g. *Fam.* X, 3 (scr. 25 September 1348).

<sup>131</sup> E.g. *Fam.* XVI, 8 (scr. 24 April 1353).

that *otium* was bound up with the establishment of an inner peace. As Ronald Witt has pointed out, Seneca's *otium* signified 'the way of life leading to spiritual enrichment.'<sup>132</sup> In his letters, Seneca described worldly pleasures as a distraction from virtue.<sup>133</sup> Being transient, temporal objects are meaningless when compared to the good, and he affirms that a conscious effort should be made to resist the 'goads' of worldly delights.<sup>134</sup> This is, Seneca believed, a relatively easy matter.<sup>135</sup> All that was required was a dedication to philosophical inquiry and a commitment to literary learning.<sup>136</sup> Throughout the letters, he describes the exercise of reason and a devotion to study as necessary for the suppression of *voluptas* and fear.<sup>137</sup> When a man practiced these activities and banished contrary sentiments from his being, he achieved the wellbeing of his soul—*euthymia*—an internal metamorphosis which was, in turn, identifiable with a productive *otium*.<sup>138</sup>

Seneca's view of *otium* as involving the establishment of inner peace through meditation and reading was repeated in those Christian writings which helped to shape the thought of the later Middle Ages. Although the term *otium* itself was most frequently used in a pejorative sense by writers drawing on the Latin Bible,<sup>139</sup> many works invest the associated concept of *vacatio* with the characteristics integral to Seneca's *otium*.<sup>140</sup> *Ps.* 45:11 was a pivotal text for this conceptual transition. In his *Moralia*, St. Gregory the Great used the verse to explain that the Sabbath was, in one sense, a purely interior concept, and went to define it as a spiritual leisure (*vacatio*) devoted to the contemplation of God.<sup>141</sup> In an anonymous twelfth-century commentary, the crucial phrase *vacate et videte* was interpreted as an exhortation to rid the mind of everything that was contrary to the contemplation of God (desire, doubt, etc.) and to establish peace in the heart.<sup>142</sup> As St. Bernard argued, it was only through the nullification

<sup>132</sup> Witt, 'Introduction' to Schaerer, p. xii.

<sup>133</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* lxxiv.

<sup>134</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* lxxxvii, Note that Seneca uses Posidonius' argument deliberately to contradict the view that it is not riches which transmit vice, but the agent who breeds it within himself through folly; *Ep.* lxxxvii, 30.

<sup>135</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* lxxxvii, 1.

<sup>136</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* lxxii, 5 ff.

<sup>137</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* lxxiv, 21; cf. *Ep.* lxxiv, 16.

<sup>138</sup> E.g. Seneca, *De tranq. animi*, II, 3–5; *Ep.* xix.

<sup>139</sup> Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, 41. See also Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness', 107–111.

<sup>140</sup> Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, 42–9.

<sup>141</sup> St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia*, V, 55; *P.L.* 76, col. 927.

<sup>142</sup> J. Leclercq, *Analecta monastica*, I, Studia Anselminana, 20 (Rome, 1948), 98.

of worldly desires and the establishment of an *interna quies* that it was possible to participate in a 'union with the Father and the Son'.<sup>143</sup> This entailed not merely a rigorous commitment to meditation on the divine and abstention from useless or vain thoughts, but also serious study of Scripture and of salutary texts.<sup>144</sup>

There are obvious parallels to be drawn with the *De otio religioso*, and its resonance with both the Senecan concept of *euthymia* and the monastic identification of *vacatio* with *quies mentis* need not be laboured. The comparison, however, cannot be sustained beyond this point. Although both classical and later Christian writers accorded *otium* or *vacatio* an interior dimension, each tradition associated this with specific physical practices in a manner that was entirely alien to the *De otio religioso*. As we have already seen, Seneca—along with Livy and Sallust—firmly believed that places could communicate vice. In his attack on the *luxuria* of Baiae, he argued that 'we ought to see to it that we flee to the greatest possible distance from provocations from vice'.<sup>145</sup> For Seneca, therefore, *otium* involved a very physical withdrawal from the world and from the *vita activa*. Although Seneca's writings on this point were often couched in a deliberately cautious fashion,<sup>146</sup> the monastic tradition which drew from his notion of *otium* expressed this notion of a *vita contemplativa* in a more ambitious and unambiguous manner. It is not necessary to review medieval monasticism in exhaustive detail, but it is valuable to point out that the injunction 'vacate et videte' was accorded an ascetic meaning which more than matched its interior meaning. For another anonymous writer of the twelfth century, 'vacate et videte' inferred not merely a respite from useless preoccupations, but also a rest from 'perverted action'.<sup>147</sup> Since thought and deed were linked, the excision of worldly desires entailed an aversion from the world itself. For the Cistercian Aelred of Rievaulx it was the absence of pointless labours, the absolute dedication to God, the disregard for the body, and the communal existence which made the

<sup>143</sup> Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, 110; q.v. St. Bernard, *Pro dom. I Novem.*, 5, 2; *P.L.* 183, col. 354.

<sup>144</sup> E.g. St. Bernard, *Ep.* 78, 4; *P.L.* 182, col. 193; cited in Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, 132–3.

<sup>145</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* li, 5: 'Id agere debemus, ut irritamenta vitiorum quam longissime profugiamus.'; trans. R. M. Gummere (Cambridge MA, 1917).

<sup>146</sup> On the difficulties presented to the Stoic by *otium*, see Laidlaw, 'Otium,' 48.

<sup>147</sup> *Dialogus de conflictu amoris Dei et linguae dolosae*, 'Alii vero sanctum habent Sabbatum, qui vacant et vident, quoniam Deus est, et non solum a perverso quiescunt opere, sed etiam, quantum possunt, quiescunt a vana meditatione.' *P.L.* 213, col. 858; quoted at Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, 105.

cloister the natural home of the one true leisure and the only place in which mental *vacatio* could properly be exercised.<sup>148</sup>

This understanding of *otium* as a physical leisure was quite out of keeping with Petrarch's elaboration of the concept. As we have seen, Petrarch's *otium* was an intellectual response to affective obstructions to the truth. Physicality played no significant role in this; quite the opposite. The reading of Scripture and other salutary texts was an effective remedy for 'demonic' doubt and despair not because the physical process of study was conducive to virtue—as Cicero and Seneca had suggested—but because the personal process of identification could strengthen the reader's belief in his capacity to redeem himself. More importantly, the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' could be combated not by eremitic retreat, but by recognising the fallacy of looking for happiness in the transient. *Otium* becomes an acknowledgement of corporeal mortality and a recognition of the primacy of the rational in the context of grace.

Given that the operative component of Petrarch's *otium* was so distinctively mental in character, it is perhaps unsurprising that he should also have broken with classical and monastic traditions in distancing the concept more clearly from physical seclusion. In the first book, he warns the monks of Montrieux against the view that particular surroundings can guard a person against vice. Implying that the Carthusian monks could fall prey to complacency in their cloistered environment, he delivers a stern warning. 'You should not infer that you are safe,' he thundered,

because you live in Christ's fortress; for although you campaign under the best leader, and your encampments are the strongest and best defended, no place should be thought to be entirely free from danger, with unsleeping and fierce enemies lying in wait and making noise on every side unless armed guards, vigorous in mind and body, keep watch on the rampart against the attacks and ambushes of the enemy.<sup>149</sup>

Despite the exploitation of the imagery in this passage, it is evident that Petrarch did intend 'in castris Cristi' and 'nullus...locus' to be understood in their literal and physical sense. The monks of Montrieux may

<sup>148</sup> Aelred of Rievaulx, *Sermones inediti*, ed. C. H. Talbot (Rome, 1952), 88, quoted in Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, 107.

<sup>149</sup> *De otio*, I, 3: 'Neque vero vos tutos arbitremini quia in castris Cristi agitis; quamvis enim sub optimo duce militetis et castra munitissima ac fortissima sint, nullus tamen locus ad plenum tutus extimandus est quem insomnes et feri hostes obsident atque circumsonant, nisi pro vallo excubent armati vigiles contra insultus insidiasque hostium animis atque corporibus intenti.'; Rotondi, 14, ll. 20–25.

have entered the monastery as soldiers of Christ and, separated from the world, may be in a positive location from which to defend themselves against doubt and *voluptas*, but they should not be deluded into thinking that their physical surroundings actually protected them. It is their devotion to Christ and their constant watchfulness against the 'insultus insidiasque hostium,' rather than their cloistered environment which is their best defence against falsehoods.<sup>150</sup>

Despite the many parallels which can be observed between particular facets of the *De otio religioso* and the classical and monastic traditions, Petrarch's treatment of *otium* seems to bear the hallmarks of St. Augustine's theology most clearly, and it is characteristic of his appropriation of the saint's works that he explored the manner in which both ancient and later Christian literature could be annexed to an Augustinian intellectual framework.

Petrarch's debt to St. Augustine's theology—and particularly to his early theology—is clearly signalled by his assertion that nothing could provide better support for a discussion of *otium* than the *De vera religione*;<sup>151</sup> but that the *De otio religioso* drew particular inspiration from St. Augustine is recommended most strongly by the form of interior peace to which Petrarch's *otium* pointed. Although Augustine's works in general do not display much evidence of his having responded directly to the classical tradition of *otium*,<sup>152</sup> he elaborated on many of the themes which early Christian thinkers derived from Greek philosophy, and offered an analysis of *vacatio* which went beyond the ἡσυχία sought by Evagrius and the desert fathers, while at the same time turning quietly to classical literature for inspiration. In his sermon on Ps. 45:11, Augustine described a form of productive leisure which discreetly continues Latin archetypes in a manner quite different from that of later Christian discussions of *vacatio*.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>150</sup> Cf. *De otio*, I, 3; Rotondi, 17, ll. 3–8, quoting *James* 4:7, 8.

<sup>151</sup> *De otio*, I, 3: '...loquenti enim de otio religioso, quid oportunius quam *Vere religionis* liber astipuletur?'; Rotondi, 18, ll. 23–4.

<sup>152</sup> Hagendahl's study of St. Augustine's reaction to and use of the Latin classics does not reveal any serious reaction to the most important Roman descriptions of *otium*. I cannot find any evidence to suggest that Augustine attached any significance to discussions of *otium* in Cicero, Seneca, Cato, Livy, Sallust, or Ennius. Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*.

<sup>153</sup> Augustine, *En. in Psalmos, I–L*, ed. D. E. Dekkers O.S.B and J. Fraipont, *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* xxxviii, *Aurelii Augustini Opera*, Pars. X, 1 (Turnhout, 1956), xlv, 14. Gerosa briefly observes a parallel with the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, although he omits to follow the connection fully, and also draws attention to Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, XXII, 30; Gerosa, *Umanesimo cristiano del Petrarca*, 142–3.

Deconstructing the apparently simple psalmic verse, Augustine explains that if man—whose power is so limited—is to be redeemed, he must see (*videre*) that it is through God alone that he will be reformed.<sup>154</sup> The truth, however, is invisible when the mind is consumed by a ‘struggling tumult’.<sup>155</sup> When it is said ‘vacate et videte’ therefore, Augustine explains that what is meant is a *vacatio a contradictionibus*—a respite from the contradictions that cloud the mind achieved through conscious intellectual endeavour and used for the sake of the recognition of the truth.<sup>156</sup>

It is not unreasonable to see Augustine’s *vacatio* as a form of the *otium negotiosum*, and it seems fair to suggest that he was indeed contributing—perhaps unconsciously—to a classical tradition of attributing positive value to productive leisure. Nevertheless, his understanding of *vacatio/otium* is self-evidently idiosyncratic, and stands at a distance from the *otium negotiosum* advocated by those like Seneca.

Although Seneca’s conception of the *otium negotiosum* involved the suppression of contrary desires for the attainment of intellectual solace, St. Augustine’s *vacatio* was a more explicitly interior concept. Rather than seeing man as an actor ‘goaded’ to evil deeds by physical objects, Augustine portrays human beings as capable of confusing—and even ‘blinding’—themselves with contradictions of mind. The implication of this distinction is significant. The explanatory exhortation ‘reprimite animos vestros a contradictionibus’ which concludes the exegesis makes *vacatio* a personal resolution of an intellectual tension and refers the concept directly to the opposition between *voluptas* and *ratio* in relation to the truth. In the *De civitate Dei*, this is made more obvious. Discussing the law of the heavenly and earthly cities, Augustine explains that pure contemplation of the truth is impossible without peace. Peace, in turn, cannot be had without the suppression of animal desire and the supremacy of the rational soul.<sup>157</sup> When—in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*—Augustine urged his listeners to have peace in themselves by resolving the contradictions of their minds, he therefore communicates a sense that *vacatio* must necessarily involve the recognition of the futility of mortal things and the aspiration to rational existence. An observant reader, not overly troubled

<sup>154</sup> Augustine, *En. in Psalmos*, xlv, 14. That it is *through* God that man is to be redeemed, and not necessarily actively *by* God seems to be confirmed by the final words of the paragraph.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.: ‘Hoc non videt tumultus contentiosus animi humani...’

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, XIX, 14.

by issues of textual chronology, would have had no difficulty in seeing the rather generalised exhortation of the *Enarrationes* as compatible with the moral theology of the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*.<sup>158</sup>

In direct contrast to the classical tradition and—to an extent—with later monastic thought, the ‘active’ component of Augustine’s *vacatio* requires no reference to the physical world and, as such, is capable of sustaining translation into a highly flexible form of the *otium negotiosum*. Directed towards the extinction of *voluptas* and the exercise of reason, it required no concern to be given to external reality beyond that which is necessary for a comfortable existence. Provided the inner tumults of the mind were stilled, it did not matter what a man’s surroundings or occupation might be. Although there were different forms of living, Augustine did not seem to express a preference:

The dress or manner of life adopted by whoever embraces the faith that leads to God does not matter to the Heavenly City, provided that these things do not contravene the divine precepts. Hence when philosophers become Christians, they are required to change their false doctrines, but they are not compelled to change their dress or their customary mode of life, for these are not an impediment to religion. Thus, the behaviour which Varro noted as a defining characteristic of the Cynics does not matter in the least, provided that there is nothing indecent or immoderate about it. As for the three kinds of life—the life of leisure, the life of action, and the combination of both, a Christian might conduct his life in any of these ways and still attain to everlasting rewards, provided that he does so without prejudice to his faith. And it is, of course, important also that he loves the truth and performs the duties of charity.<sup>159</sup>

Although *vacatio* was necessary for the perception of the truth, the attainment of virtue was not conditional on a physical withdrawal from the

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<sup>158</sup> Augustine’s sermon on *Ps.* 45 was composed in 412, some twenty-six years after the *Soliloquies* and about twenty-one years after the *De vera religione* was completed. D. E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, ‘Tabula Chronologica’ in Augustine, *En. in Psalmos*, xv–xviii; Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 64–68.

<sup>159</sup> Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, XIX, 19: ‘Nihil sane ad istam pertinet civitatem quo habitu vel more vivendi, si non est contra divina praecepta, istam fidem, qua pervenitur ad Deum, quisque sectetur; unde ipsos quoque philosophos, quando Christiani fiunt, non habitum vel consuetudinem victus, quae nihil impedit religionem, sed falsa dogmata mutare compellit. Unde illam quam Varro adhibuit ex Cynicis differentiam, si nihil turpiter atque intemperanter agat, omnino non curat. Ex tribus vero illis vitae generibus, otioso, actuoso et ex utroque composito, quamvis salva fide quisque possit in quolibet eorum vitam ducere et ad sempiterna praemia pervenire, interest tamen quid amore teneat veritatis, quid officio caritatis impendat.’ trans. from Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge, 1998), 948.



world. The intellectual dimension was of primary importance. In a passage from the *De vera religione* which Petrarch quoted with great approval towards the end of the first book of the *De otio religioso*, Augustine further glosses 'vacate et videte'. 'Do not strive against being accustomed to material things,' he says,

[c]onquer that habit and you are victorious over all. We seek unity, the simplest thing of all. Therefore let us seek it in simplicity of heart. 'Take time and know that I am God.' This [leisure] is not the stillness of idleness but of thought, free from space and time. Swelling, fleeting phantasms do not permit us to see abiding unity. Space offers us something to love, but time steals away what we love and leaves the soul crowds of phantasms which incite desire for this or that. Thus the mind becomes restless and unhappy, vainly trying to hold that by which it is held captive. It is summoned to stillness so that it may not love the things which cannot be loved without toil. So it will master them and not be held by them.<sup>160</sup>

Petrarch's description of the manner in which the 'wiles of demons', the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' are overcome continues themes present in Christian moral treatises from the desert fathers to the fourteenth century, but is nevertheless located within the context of St. Augustine's understanding of the relationship between *voluptas* and *ratio*. As such, despite the literary connotations and heritage of the term, Petrarch's *otium* stands in close relation to Augustine's development of *vacatio*. Uniquely like Augustine, Petrarch's *otium* is founded in the mind. Its operative components—evocative of the young saint's moral theology—are based on the suppression of *voluptas* and the supremacy of rational endeavour in the context of grace. As in the *De civitate Dei* and the *De vera religione*, Petrarch uses these active elements to strip his *otium* of any physical associations: by virtue of his emphasis on intellectual endeavour, *otium* loses its literal sense of leisure and instead becomes an interior form of peace.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>160</sup> Augustine, *De vera religione*, xxxv, 65; trans. Burleigh, 258. Petrarch quotes this passage from the *De vera religione* in his discussion of 'demonic' doubt which obviously evokes the spirit of the *Enarrationes in Psalmos: De otio*, I, 7; Rotondi, 43, ll. 11–13, quoting St. Augustine, *De vera religione*, xxxv, 65. His awareness of the overlap between the two works seems palpable, particularly since it ultimately serves as a continuation of an Augustinian gloss on 'vacate et videte'. Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness', 113, notes the link to the *De vera religione*, but omits to connect the text with the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*.

<sup>161</sup> A further occasion on which this interpretation of Petrarchan *otium* is suggested appears during the discussion of demonic doubt. Shortly after Petrarch first warns the monks of Montrieux against complacency, he reminds them once again of the universality of the 'fragile warfare of life'. This leads him to question whether it is, in fact, profitable

It is Petrarch's dual insistence on the intellectual activities proper to *otium* and the concept's lack of physical meaning which marks him out most clearly as having been influenced by St. Augustine, and his acceptance of the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* as the surest guide to the Davidic verses in a letter to Boccaccio seems to add further weight to this argument.<sup>162</sup> Although his use of the word *otium* and manipulation of the connotations of productive leisure are reflective of the spirit of the classical tradition, his description of it as an interior condition dependent on experiential identification, the *meditatio mortis*, and the role of reason places the *De otio religioso* at some distance from classical Latin archetypes. By the same token, the notion of *otium* also stands at some remove from the monastic tradition. While *otium* is defined as a response to the Three Enemies of Man, and the *De otio religioso* ostensibly addresses the leisure he had witnessed at the monastery of Montrieux, his exhortation to live as a pilgrim in the body marks the furthest limit of his direct absorption of monastic writings on *otium*. He was certainly prepared to draw support from the lives and works of holy men such as St. Bernard, but the interior nature of Petrarch's *otium* precluded him from using the concept to draw a necessary connection between the exercise of *otium* and the regulated seclusion of a cloistered life, or with the manual labour conventionally prescribed as a remedy for *otium otiosum*.<sup>163</sup>

Whereas some scholars like Kristeller, Trinkaus, Lokaj, Seidlmeyer, and Constable have viewed the *De otio religioso* as a comment on the monastic life which either idealises or excoriates a cloistered existence, this impression of *otium* casts the text in a different light. Although there are indeed grounds for seeing the text as a reflection on the status of the religious, Petrarch's description of an interior, intellectual *otium* explores a facet of moral living which may be shared by both the secular and the religious life, and which transcended the confines of the cloister. Called forth by a visit to the monastery at Montrieux, the *De otio religioso* nevertheless presented a form of active leisure based on identification, the *meditatio*

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for the monks to have a literal 'quies' and to believe that they are without an enemy. Although it would be difficult to offer too strident an interpretation on the basis of a relatively short passage, it appears that *otium* can be had even when surrounded by the objects of all corporeal desires. Indeed, there is a suggestion that *otium* is almost better where it is enjoyed surrounded obviously by the danger of the passions. *De otio*, I, 3; Rotondi, 20, ll. 19–24.

<sup>162</sup> *Fam.* XVIII, 3.

<sup>163</sup> Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, 37–40; H. J. Sieben, "'Quies' et 'Otium'," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique, mystique, doctrine et histoire* (Paris, 1985), 12: 2748–51.

*mortis*, and reason in the context of grace which could be applied in all walks of life. Basing his concept of *otium* on Augustine's *vacatio*, Petrarch explored linguistic and conceptual similarities between the classical and monastic traditions to produce a text which—while of great relevance to the monastic life—was able to serve as a model for virtuous living applicable even to those who, like him, inhabited the secular realm.

### 7. *Augustinianism in the De Otio Religioso*

The manner in which Petrarch employed elements of St. Augustine's theology in the *De otio religioso* has many parallels with his use of the saint's thought in the *Secretum*. Despite the fact that the two texts are radically different in both form and style, it is noteworthy that in both texts St. Augustine appears not only to have provided Petrarch with a model for his engagement with moral questions, but also to have acted as a fixed star in the firmament of Petrarch's intellectual universe, around which the luminaries of different traditions seemed to turn.

Insofar as the substance of Petrarch's moral argumentation is concerned, one cannot help but remark that the nature and content of *otium* in the *De otio religioso* appears to correspond well with the advice dispensed by Augustinus in the *Secretum*. This parallelism reflects the fact that the heuristic framework of the two works was drawn from St. Augustine's early theology. This is first evident in the problems which the *De otio religioso* and the *Secretum* were intended to address. Although the one approaches the problem in terms of the seven deadly sins, and the other in terms of the Three Enemies of Man, each text addresses the opposition of *virtus* and *voluptas*, and engages with the problem by concentrating on the perception of truth. In each text, it is *veritas*, and not *voluntas*, which is the key to virtue, and *veritas* itself is explored in terms of the opposition of the fleetingness of the temporal world and the eternal bliss of the next life. It is the priority of cognition over will, and the connection between truth and the eternal happiness that the soul may enjoy after death that signal that Petrarch was not only at some remove from the precepts of classical philosophy, but was also deeply inspired by the questions which exercised St. Augustine in his early theological works.

But their shared descent from St. Augustine's early theology is also evident in the moral programmes which the *Secretum* and the *De otio religioso* advance. Instead of echoing the Stoic doctrine of the will, or appealing to St. Augustine's later emphasis on grace and providence, Petrarch looked

to St. Augustine's early works for the view that the intellectual practices necessary to merit redemption could be derived from the role played by truth in distinguishing between virtue and vice. Following works such as the *De vera religione*, both the *Secretum* and the *De otio religioso* express confidence that the true nature of the soul and the identity of the *vera felicitas* can be perceived using reason, and are unambiguous in their certainty of man's capacity for redemption, despite lamenting the fact that men can deceive themselves so easily. So, too, each of the two works picks up on the importance which St. Augustine attached to the *meditatio mortis* in emphasising that the recognition of corporeal mortality is the means by which a man may turn from the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' and towards God. Once a person has recognised that an adherence to the transient not only leads him further away from *felicitas*, but also puts him at a distance from his distinctive humanity, he will naturally wish to pursue the eternal and exercise his unique capacity for rational endeavour.

Yet while Petrarch drew on St. Augustine's early works for his understanding of the manner in which *voluptas* could be spurned and *virtus* embraced, he was also sensitive to St. Augustine's role as an intellectual bridge between different traditions. As in the *Secretum*, Petrarch's knowledge of St. Augustine allowed him to mine classical literature for apposite references and gnomic references. Although he imbued the concept with a distinctly Augustinian meaning, Petrarch's awareness of the rich heritage of the term 'otium', and of the degree to which St. Augustine had himself relied on classical texts provided him with the opportunity to read Cicero's dialogues and Seneca's letters—for example—as often (but not universally) complementary precursors to the Christian thought of the bishop of Hippo. In contrast to the *Secretum*, however, Petrarch's use of St. Augustine in the *De otio religioso* explored not only the conceptual links between the saint's theology and earlier, classical philosophy, but also the connections between Augustinianism and contemporary and later, monastic thought. On the one hand, the connections which Petrarch perceived between Augustine and Lactantius, for example, are made explicit. On the other hand, while remaining true to the spirit of St. Augustine's early thought, Petrarch was able, as we have seen, to recognise the extent to which the medieval understanding of *otium* could be adapted to his own purposes, and to appeal (however accurately or inaccurately) to figures such as St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Bruno, and St. Bernard as continuators of a broadly Augustinian tradition. In exploring *otium*, therefore, Petrarch clearly viewed St. Augustine as a link-figure uniting classical antiquity, early Christian thought, and medieval monasticism.

In some respects, however, the role played by St. Augustine in the *De otio religioso* is perhaps *more* revealing than that in the *Secretum*. Although both works quote directly from the same three Augustinian treatises—the *Confessiones*, the *De civitate Dei*, and the *De vera religione*—the manner in which these quotations are used and related to the underlying early-Augustinian argument is slightly different. Perhaps as a result of the fact that Augustinus is a participant in the dialogue, Petrarch quotes Augustine very sparingly in the *Secretum*, and even then in a rather literary fashion. The early-Augustinian character of the discourse lurks beneath the surface of the discussion, and, as was appropriate for such a ‘dramatic’ text, little or no attempt is made to reveal how Petrarch understood the relationship between the treatises which he quoted. In the *De otio religioso*, however, Petrarch not only quoted directly from St. Augustine’s works on a significant number of occasions, but also discreetly gave some indication of the manner in which he read the texts quoted. Although the *Confessiones*, the *De civitate Dei*, and the *De vera religione* are quoted extensively, Petrarch selected passages from the later works in such a way as to complement, rather than contradict, the theological precepts which he derived from the saint’s earlier writings. The *Confessiones* and the *De civitate Dei* are, in other words, viewed not as repositories of fideistic thought which Petrarch wished to reproduce uncritically, but as sources of principles which could support the lessons which he drew from the *De vera religione* and other early texts. In that Petrarch associated *otium* with a form of mental peace that could be attained through the *meditatio mortis* and the use of reason, but also appealed to the *De civitate Dei* and the *Confessiones*, it appears that on this occasion, he read Augustine’s later texts through the lens of his earlier writings. That is not, of course, to say that Petrarch was unaware of St. Augustine’s later fideism, or that he was ignorant of the stress which the saint laid upon the role of grace and providence towards the end of his life: he had, for example, noted passages in his copy of the *De gratia et libero arbitrio* which speak precisely to this point.<sup>164</sup> Rather, Petrarch drew primarily on works such as the *De vera religione* in his exploration of *otium*, and used his knowledge of points of continuity between Augustine’s early and later thought to draw supporting quotations from texts which are otherwise more overtly fideistic.

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<sup>164</sup> MS Paris, Bibl. Nat., Lat. 2103; on Petrarch’s annotations, see Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 184–6.

8. *The Augustinianism of the De Otio Religioso and Salutati's De Seculo et Religione*

The extent to which Petrarch's conception of *otium* in the *De otio religioso* was derived from a reading of St. Augustine's early theology has considerable implications for the manner in which his treatise should be located in relation to later Renaissance thought, and in this regard, it is instructive to return to the oft-drawn comparison with Coluccio Salutati's *De seculo et religione*.

It has already been observed that, despite their apparent similarities, Petrarch's *De otio religioso* and Salutati's *De seculo et religione* address subtly different problems.<sup>165</sup> While the latter consciously engaged with the question of the relative merit of the religious and secular lives, the former attempts to describe a form of *otium* which may be practiced both by the secular Petrarch and the monastic Gherardo. But the distinction between the two works goes deeper, and can in many ways be related to the manner in which Petrarch and Salutati used and understood St. Augustine's theology.

Salutati's defence of the religious life is based on two basic premises. The first principle is that of necessity. Combining classical notions of a 'golden age' and the Augustinian concept of the two cities, Salutati argued that while 'nature desires hunger to be repressed, thirst extinguished, rain and cold repelled, the force of the winds and heat to be driven off,' any desire which went beyond the merely necessary was derived from evil.<sup>166</sup> Offering a rather literal reading of the two cities, Salutati claimed that history itself demonstrated that while poverty led to the rise of both the City of God and the city of the world, wealth had corrupted each in turn.<sup>167</sup> Hence it followed that those in each of the two cities should cast off riches and follow only necessity, a task which it was within the capability of all

<sup>165</sup> It is worth noting is passing that Salutati does not appear to have known Petrarch's *De otio religioso*. On Salutati's knowledge of Petrarch's works, see Ullman, *Humanism*, 129–209, 240–4.

<sup>166</sup> Salutati, *De seculo et religione*, 80: '...famem enim reprimi, sitim extinguere, imbres et frigora pelli, ventorumque et estuum vim arceri natura desiderat. Quidquid ultra est a malo est.' Trans. in Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 23.

<sup>167</sup> Salutati, *De seculo et religione*, 124–5: 'Quod si cogitarem duas omnino fuisse debitas mortalibus civitates, unam spiritualem quam dei dicimus, alteram vero carnalem quam mundi possumus appellare, et ad alterutram ipsarum affectus nostros et finem nostrorum operum statueremus, occurreret nobis utramque civitatem a pauperibus institutam, a divitibus vero dirutam et corruptam.'

men to accomplish.<sup>168</sup> Although this alone was insufficient to distinguish clearly between the secular and religious lives, Salutati's second principle allowed him to develop his point about necessity into a spiritual hierarchy. In defending the abandonment of riches in favour of the merely necessary, Salutati had cause to draw attention to the role of the will. Although man is the recipient of grace, Salutati argued that 'it should be one's free will to fulfil the eternal commands of God in voluntary devotion,'<sup>169</sup> and it was hence a matter of free will to turn from riches to necessity, and to faithfully obey God in all things. Bending this to the subject of vows, Salutati went on to argue that while an individual act of will in favour of necessity and faith was a single good, the person who freely bound himself to a life of poverty and divine service with a vow achieved goodness both in his singular actions, and in the vow itself. A person in the world who freely renounced wealth was thus less meritorious than a person who committed himself to the religious life, and dedicated his will and work to God.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 81–2: 'Tolle cupidinem, miser homo, depone divitias, abrenuntia mundo, duc vitam tuam preceptis, coneris adimplere consilia, subde voluntatem tuam voluntati divine... incipe diligere deum, odire mundum, amare paupertatem, horrere divitias. Non potes hec relinquere nisi odio habeas; non potes ad illa transire nisi diligas. Nec iam etatis nostre fragilitatem accuses. Potens est enim corpus nostrum per omnes incommoditates transire. Non referam tibi Danielelem et socios in legumina regie mense delicias commutantes. Non proponam tibi in exemplum maximum illum inter natos mulierum domini precursorem; non anachoritas, de quibus mirabilia legimus in vita patrum, non heremitas etiam nostri temporis; non cenobitas, quorum multos videmus eligere paupertatem, amare ieiunia, et omnem fugere voluptatem. Scio enim quod, cum istos obiecero, respondebit amator mundi illos spiritus sancti gratia suffultos hec facere nunc posse et hactenus potuisse, et spiritum spirare quando, quantum, et ubi vult hocque a nostre voluntatis arbitrio non pendere.'

<sup>169</sup> Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 31.

<sup>170</sup> Salutati, *De seculo et religione*, 111–2: 'Tu enim te ipsum, voluntatem et opera tua deo religionem ingrediens dedicasti... Hoc est vere holocaustum, id est totum exustum et incensum, in quo totum quod sumus et possumus deo committimus, et nichil in nostra relinquimus potestate. Hoc non faviunt qui sine voto solum operas offerunt, et ob id apud dei benignitatem non est dignum ipsos tantundem quantum votis obnoxios promereri. Quis enim plus gratie meretur, an qui solum fructus arboris sic superiori donaret quod ad illorum prestationem nisi quantum sibi placuerit non teneatur, an qui et arborem donat et fructus tali condicione quod etiam post donationem nequeat revocare? Neimini dubium illum qui plus donaverit plus mereri... Etenim qui bonum libera voluntate facit, sicut evenit in solutis a voto, unicum bonum facit; qui vero vovet et facit, dum voto se obligat, meretur et bonum facit. Dum autem vota reddit, licet faciat debitum, nichilominus bonum facit. Non enim audiendi sunt qui delirantes conantur asserere bona que sine voto fiunt his que ex obedientia voti facimus esse maiora, adducentes quod plus obligamur libera voluntate donanti quam debitum persolventi, quasi quod vovens debitor factus sit, non ex libera processerit voluntate, et quod aliquid libere promittenti nichil eo quod romiserit



Although the *De seculo et religione* deftly draws on a multiplicity of classical and patristic sources, the figure of St. Augustine dominates Salutati's argument in a manner which is perhaps even more prominent than in the *De otio religioso*. Yet while both Petrarch and Salutati turned to St. Augustine for inspiration, it will already be apparent that they did so in a different manner.

It is immediately obvious that Salutati embraced Augustinian principles that are not found in Petrarch's treatise. The concept of necessity, the idea of the two cities, and the operative primacy of the will form the foundation of Salutati's argument, and are unmistakably Augustinian in origin, but are also absent from Petrarch's *De otio religioso*. Indeed, Petrarch's defence of *otium* relies on a form of Augustinianism which would perhaps have horrified Salutati: the notion that *otium* should be understood as an 'intellective' form of leisure, associated with the use of reason and the meditation on death may have been derived from St. Augustine's theology, but was nevertheless at a considerable remove from the conclusions which the Florentine chancellor drew from the saint's writings.

In some ways, the fact that Petrarch and Salutati espoused such different viewpoints while each taking inspiration from St. Augustine's works may seem somewhat perplexing and if we were to view 'Augustinianism' as a monolithic body of thought, our puzzlement may well be justified. Despite their profound differences, however, Petrarch and Salutati could both legitimately claim to be Augustinians. The divergence of Petrarch's conception of *otium* from Salutati's understanding of the secular and religious lives—which may also be expressed as the distinction between cognition/intellection and voluntarism—lies in the fact that each was derived from a different, but equally valid, understanding of St. Augustine's theology, and drew greatest inspiration from a different phase of Augustine's intellectual development. The parting of their ways has more to do with the immense variation found in St. Augustine's theology than with either Petrarch or Salutati being 'more' or 'less' authentically Augustinian. Petrarch and Salutati both quoted extensively from the *De civitate Dei* and the *Confessiones* in the *De otio religioso* and the *De seculo et religione*, but while Salutati appears to have read these late Augustinian works as representative of a voluntarism that worked in co-operation with providence and grace, Petrarch mined them for citations that were

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debeamus . . . Errant hi profecto. Nam longe maiore caritate, que finis est precepti, vovetur atque perficitur quam si simpliciter aliquid prebeamus.'

congenial to his cognitive or intellectual view of the virtuous life. While Salutati read St. Augustine's writings through the lens of his later works, Petrarch did precisely the opposite, and read the later writings through the lens of the earlier texts. In each case, both Petrarch and Salutati were able to take advantage of the considerable threads of continuity running through Augustine's theology, but were nevertheless able to arrive at quite different, but equally valid, interpretations of the saint's thought.

Perhaps most importantly, however, the distinction which may be drawn between the forms of Augustinianism employed by Petrarch and Salutati has implications for the manner in which we might understand the 'humanistic' character of their respective works. Although it has often been difficult to describe the *De otio religioso* as one of Petrarch's more obviously 'humanistic' works, it has been suggested that the specifically humanistic character of the text lies in its *appropriation* of monastic thought. In other words, the humanism of Petrarch's treatise is thought to have been founded on his adaptation of the monastic concept of *otium* to a fourteenth-century rendering of the classical contrast between the active and contemplative lives. As we have seen, however, Petrarch avoided contrasting two discreet modes of living, and instead imbued *otium* with the moral precepts found in St. Augustine's early works while playing with the classical and monastic connotations of the term. At the same time as he adapted examples from medieval monasticism to his immediate purpose, Petrarch appealed to works of classical literature in an essentially gnomic fashion, only venturing beyond the merely literary either to criticise ancient thought or to bend the meaning of certain principles (such as Heraclitan flux) to the dualism of the eternal and temporal worlds. The early theology of St. Augustine provided the central point of reference throughout the work, and shaped the manner in which monastic and, more particularly, classical works were employed. The voluntarism of the Stoics—which might have so readily been annexed to the providential thought of the late Augustine—was avoided in favour of a more cognitive approach to virtue, while the concepts of 'secular' and 'religious'—which might have accommodated a form of the idea of the two cities—were ignored as a result of Petrarch's lack of interest both in will and grace, and both classical and monastic tropes were manipulated in such a way as to bring the intellectual aspects of *otium* to the fore. As has been observed on several occasions, Petrarch was still able to use Augustine as a bridge between classical and Christian traditions—just as he was able to use the saint as a link-figure with later monastic thought—but the early-Augustinian notions on which he relied affected both the

classical precepts to which he turned, and the manner in which he made use of classical literature. Instead of the *De otio religioso* being a humanistic appropriation of monastic thought, therefore, it might perhaps be more appropriate to describe it as an early-Augustinian appropriation of classical and monastic thought.

This stands in stark contrast to the interplay between Augustinian and classical influences in Salutati's *De seculo et religione*. In relying on St. Augustine's later theology, rather than on his earlier thought, the humanistic qualities of Salutati's treatise are rather different to those of Petrarch's *De otio religioso*. On the one hand, Augustine's mature emphasis on the co-operation of the will with grace and providence not only dovetailed neatly with the voluntaristic foundations of the Stoic distinction between two discreet modes of existence, but also allowed historical examples to be drawn from classical history with the same confidence as found in the *De civitate Dei*. On the other hand, the concept of the two cities could itself be adapted to the contrast between the active and contemplative lives (albeit rather unsubtly), and late Augustinian thought could be married to Stoic voluntarism without undue concern at another level. As with Petrarch, the nature of Salutati's Augustinianism profoundly affected the nature and trajectory of his classical interests in the *De seculo et religione*; but unlike Petrarch, the fact that Salutati looked to Augustine's late works, rather than to his early works, drew him to different aspects of classical thought, and may in some respects even have allowed him to be more overt in his appropriation of classical examples and quotations.

Despite the confidence with which the *De otio religioso* has been compared with the *De seculo et religione*, therefore, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that a more cautious contrast may be drawn between the two works on the basis of the role played by St. Augustine's theology. Petrarch's reliance on the early Augustine not only puts him at a distance from the later humanistic interest in contrasting the secular and the religious lives, but also gives a rather different character to the humanism of his work. Although it would be invidious to draw any more general conclusions at this stage, or to delve into the complex reasons which may underpin this contrast, we may perhaps be forgiven for suggesting that while Augustine acted as a mediator of humanism in both the *De otio religioso* and the *De seculo et religione*, the diversity of his thought made him more of a divisive figure in this strand of early humanism than anything else, and the ease with which different connections could be drawn between aspects of his thought and classical literature illustrates the distance which separates Petrarch from Salutati more than the ties which bind their respective works.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE HIDDEN LIFE OF SOLITUDE

#### 1. *Historiographical Debates on the Meaning and Sources of the De vita solitaria*

Addressed to Philippe de Cabassoles, bishop of Cavaillon, the *De vita solitaria* was intended as a celebration of the companionable solitude which Petrarch had enjoyed with the prelate during the latter's visit to Vaucluse in early 1346.<sup>1</sup> Devoted to exploring the nature and merit of the solitary life, the treatise—often regarded as one of Petrarch's most intimate compositions—is divided into two distinct books, which may, in general terms, be regarded as dealing with theory and *exempla* respectively. In the first book, Petrarch sought to demonstrate the superiority of the *vita solitaria* by contrasting the lives of a hypothetical *occupatus* with an imaginary *solitarius*, and the contours of this typology are briefly described in terms of the 'truth' or 'virtue' of solitude in the dedicatory epistle. Although the solitary life was a 'truth' which was known to Philippe, it was foreign to the vulgar crowd, which rejoiced only in its errors.<sup>2</sup> Puffed up with arrogance by their Aristotelian learning, men of the common type rush out of their homes in the early morning, and pass their days flaunting their 'educated folly' around the city, measuring the squares and walls of the city, admiring the frivolous dresses of women, and captivated by marble statues.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z Foreword; P 'Ad Philippum Cavallicesem Episcopum'; *Prose*, 290–2: 'Quid vero nunc prius ex me speres, quam quod et in ore et in corde semper habui, et ipse qui modo sub oculis est locus hortatur? Solitarie scilicet otioseque vite preconium, quam cum sepe olim solus, tum precipue nuper mecum brevi quidem nec nisi dierum quindecim spatio degustasti.'; cf. *Sen.* VI, 5; Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 54–5.

<sup>2</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z Foreword; P 'Ad Philippum Cavallicesem Episcopum'; *Prose*, 286: 'Ut enim immortalis est veritas, sic fictio et mendacium non durant . . . posse tibi res meas, pater optime, placere, que ut paucis placeant laboro, quando, ut vides, sepe res novas tracto durasque et rigidas, peregrinasque sententias et ab omnia moderantis vulgi sensibus atque auribus abhorrentes. Si inductis ergo non placeo, nichil est quod querar: habeo quod optavi, bonam de ingenio meo spem.'

<sup>3</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z Foreword; P 'Ad Philippum Cavallicesem Episcopum'; *Prose*, 292: 'Idem si probari vulgo velim, frustra nitar, nec vulgo tantum inscio sed multis quoque qui sibi literatissimi videntur, fortasse etiam nec falluntur. Sed copia literarum non semper modestum pectus inhabitat, et sepe inter linguam et animum, inter doctrinam et vitam concertatio magna est. De his autem loquor qui, literis impediti et onerati potius quam

Immersed in their fruitless ways and their false notions, these people are removed from the path of truth, and, preoccupied with the hollow enticements of the world, they do not see, as Petrarch explained in the opening paragraphs of the first book, that a noble spirit could not find peace except in God, or in himself and his own thoughts, or in some mind joined to his own by great similarity.<sup>4</sup> To those who would seek repose, therefore, 'a turbis hominum urbiumque turbinibus quam longissime recedendum est.'<sup>5</sup> In the second book, Petrarch turned from the abstract to the exemplary, and examined the lives of a number of votaries of the solitary life. Short biographies of Biblical, ancient, patristic, and medieval figures are deployed to serve both as a commendation of virtuous solitude, and as a further illustration of the activities proper to the *solitarius*.

Begun no more than a year later, the *De otio religioso* was composed as a companion-piece to the *De vita solitaria*,<sup>6</sup> and, addressing the monks of Montrieux, Petrarch pointed out that his treatise was related to the *De vita solitaria* both in subject and style. Describing the mode of living appropriate to the man who would be virtuous, each of the two texts was, he claimed, intended to demonstrate that 'it is the mark of mortal madness which rejoices more in labour than in the fruits of labour.'<sup>7</sup> This is

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ornati, rem pulcerrimam, scire, turpissimis moribus miscuerunt, tanta animi vanitate ut scolas nunquam vidisse multo melius fuerit; qui hoc unum ibi didicerunt, superbire et literarum fiducia vaniores esse cunctis hominibus; qui, quieturum libenter Aristotilem ventilantes per compita, cuneatim vulgo mirante pretereunt; quique vicis atque porticibus effusi numerant turres equosque et quadrigas; qui plateas et menia mentiuntur, femineoque inhiantes ornatui, quo nichil est fugacius nichil inanius, obstupescunt. Neque solum in vivis, sed et in marmoreis herent imaginibus et ceu collocuturi subsistunt attoniti occursibus statuarum, queque novissima pars insanie est, turbis et strepitu delectantur.'

<sup>4</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, i, 1; P I, i; *Prose*, 296: 'Credo ego generosum animum, preter Deum ubi finis est noster, preter seipsum et archanas curas suas, aut preter aliquem multa similitudine sibi coniunctum animum, nusquam acquiescere...'

<sup>5</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, i, 1; P I, i; *Prose*, 296: 'Atque sive Deum, sive nos ipsos et honesta studia, quibus utrunque consequimur, sive conformem nobis querimus animum, a turbis hominum urbiumque turbinibus quam longissime recedendum est.'

<sup>6</sup> For the dating and composition of the *De vita solitaria*, see B. L. Ullman, 'The composition of Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* and the history of the Vatican manuscript,' *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati*, 4, *Letteratura classica e umanistica*, Studi e testi 195 (Vatican City, 1946), 107–42; A. Avena, 'La composizione del trattato *De vita solitaria*,' *Rivista critica della letteratura italiana* 12 (1907): 193–202; G. Martellotti, 'Nota critica al testo del *De vita solitaria*,' in *Prose*, 1166–8.

<sup>7</sup> *De otio*, I, 1: 'Sileo que sequuntur, nam et ea me scripsisse recolo in eo libro, quem huic et materia et stilo valde cognatum *de solitaria vita* nuper edidi, qui hunc et tempore, sic serie rerum preit, et omnia ad unum tendunt, ad notam scilicet mortalis insanie magis labore gaudentibus quam laboris fructu.' Rotondi, 6, ll.27–32. Cf. *De otio*, I, 8: 'Non est animus nominatim hic reliquos attingere, quorum nomina satis in secundam *Solitarie vite* partem conguessisse videor.' Rotondi, 48, l.34–49, l.1.

a claim which has much to recommend it. Like *otium*, *solitudo* had virtue as its object in the *De vita solitaria*. As Umberto Bosco has observed, Petrarch consciously presented solitude as ‘the “vestibule” of all virtue,’<sup>8</sup> while Arnaud Tripet has noted that the *vita solitaria* was ‘the condition of all virtuous ways’.<sup>9</sup> This apparent congruence between the *De vita solitaria* and the *De otio religioso* is sustained by the apparent interchangeability of the terms ‘otium’ and ‘solitudo’ in the two works. As in both the *Rerum memorandarum libri* and the *Invective contra medicum*, *otium* and *solitudo* are used almost synonymously throughout the *De vita solitaria*, and the impression of a shared semantic space is implicit in the use of both ‘solitarius’ and ‘otiosus’ to describe the man who is free from *occupationes* in the first book.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, ‘otium’ and its derivatives appear on more than eighty occasions in the *De vita solitaria* and are, in fact, employed more extensively than in the *De otio religioso*. Similarly, the implication of conceptual co-dependence is latent in Petrarch’s use of ‘solitudo’ to introduce his theme in the first book of the *De otio religioso*.<sup>11</sup>

But while the *De vita solitaria* and the *De otio religioso* were intended to function as a pair, the two works nevertheless present something of a puzzle. Quite apart from the differences in their style and structure—which are striking—the nature of solitude itself appears to be at some remove from the character of *otium*, and the sources on which Petrarch is thought to have based his understanding of the solitary life seem to be at variance with those which we have identified for the *De otio religioso*. Although Petrarch used *otium* to denote an intellectual freedom from desire and despair, scholars have been inclined to view *solitudo* as more closely connected with the pursuit of a peaceful retirement in the countryside dedicated to study in the company of a select group of friends. Rather than being a continuation of the Augustinian notion of *vacatio*, the solitude which Petrarch described in the *De vita solitaria* is commonly interpreted as a humanistic development of the classical notion of a *vita contemplativa*, defined in opposition to the active engagement in civic life, a *vita activa*.

Since the *De vita solitaria* first began to receive serious scholarly attention in its own right in the early twentieth century, it has been viewed as a

<sup>8</sup> Bosco, *Petrarca*, 109.

<sup>9</sup> A. Tripet, *Pétrarque ou la connaissance de soi*, Travaux d’humanisme et Renaissance XCI (Geneva, 1967), 41; cf. Constable, ‘Petrarch and Monasticism,’ 63.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 1; P I, ii; *Prose*, 302; Z I, iii, 1; P I, iii; *Prose*, 318.

<sup>11</sup> *De otio*, I, 1; Rotondi, 2, ll. 7–10.



work which was composed primarily under the influence of classical texts, and as a treatise which was as distinctly humanistic as it was personal. In the introduction to his translation of the *De vita solitaria*, Jacob Zeitlin interpreted the treatise as a conscious engagement with the classical theme of the contrast between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*. For Zeitlin, Petrarch abhorred the city and longed for the innocence of the countryside, in a manner reminiscent of Horace's *Satires*.<sup>12</sup> Far from the hateful mob, Zeitlin suggests, Petrarch held that a man might find peace and virtue on the verdant banks of a rolling stream and, surrounded by oaks and beeches, find happiness.<sup>13</sup> This distance from the vice of the city, however, did not equate to isolation from friends. Zeitlin contends that Petrarch—like Cicero—seems to have had a horror for that lonely form of solitude and felt that a few good-hearted friends could contribute as much to the attainment of virtue as the separation from vulgar hordes and the vicious goads of the city.<sup>14</sup> Among good people, Zeitlin argues, Petrarch believed a man could move more readily towards the good. The same appears to have been true of the company of books and the anticipated society of readership.<sup>15</sup> As Zeitlin points out, Petrarch openly shares Seneca's view that solitude without literary endeavour would be like a living death.<sup>16</sup> Separate from all the distractions of public life, a man could follow the Stoic philosopher in learning much from reading improving works and writing texts of great value to humanity. By the same token, he could emulate Virgil in presenting the countryside as the perfect setting for the *vita contemplativa* and the ideal environment for poetic composition.<sup>17</sup>

In Zeitlin's view, Petrarch's conception of *solitudo* is derived entirely from classical archetypes. There is, in Zeitlin's opinion, 'scarcely a trace' of 'Christian mysticism' in the *De vita solitaria*, and Petrarch's image of rural seclusion could well be described as 'un-Christian'.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, even in treating the 'Christian votaries of the solitary life' in the second book,

<sup>12</sup> Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 55–7; Tripet, *Pétrarque ou la connaissance de soi*, 49. Cf. Horace, *Sat.* II, 6. On this satire and its Epicurean associations see, for example, N. Rudd, *The Satires of Horace* (London, 1994), 243–257, esp. 250–1.

<sup>13</sup> See also Tripet, *Pétrarque ou la connaissance de soi*, 49.

<sup>14</sup> Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 62; Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 54; Bosco, *Petrarca*, 110.

<sup>15</sup> Literary endeavour and companionship are treated as equivalent in Bosco's study of Petrarch's life, and it is interesting that they are seen as being facilitated solely by distance from the city and attendant impediments. Bosco, *Petrarca*, 110–11.

<sup>16</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* lxxxii, 4.

<sup>17</sup> M. O'Rourke Boyle, *Petrarch's Genius. Penitimento and Prophecy* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford, 1991), 44–73, esp. 44–53.

<sup>18</sup> Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 57.

Zeitlin argued that Petrarch actually betrays a distaste for the practices of his 'monkish heroes' and reveals a secular and Horatian preference for 'the avoidance of slovenliness and boorishness, and for the middle course in all things.'<sup>19</sup> Although approaching the text from a somewhat different perspective, Tripet similarly affirms that Petrarch's *solitudo* was in all significant respects modelled after the classical idea of a *vita contemplativa*, and most closely resembled aspects of Stoic and Epicurean philosophy.<sup>20</sup> For both Zeitlin and Tripet, the substantive influence of St. Augustine's theology was simply no-where to be found.

Since the publication of Zeitlin's translation, however, many scholars have come to question the degree to which Petrarch neglected patristic and monastic thought in the *De vita solitaria*, and have drawn attention to the compatibility of classical and Christian traditions. Although expressing himself rather tentatively, Martellotti pointed to the concord achieved between competing 'pagan' and Christian strands in the text.<sup>21</sup> Developing this view further, Giles Constable has suggested that the classical images deployed in the *De vita solitaria* were manipulated in such a way that they actually supported a monastic view of solitude.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Charles Trinkaus has contended that Petrarch's apparent predilection for Stoic and Epicurean thought was not incompatible either with monastic writings or with a celebration of the life of the religious.<sup>23</sup> Pursuing a similar line of argument (although writing some time before Martellotti, Trinkaus, and Constable), Bosco not merely suggested that Petrarch's Stoic and Epicurean references were compatible with Christian theology, but also attempted to forge a link with the exhortation 'vacate et videte' in the *De otio religioso* by suggesting somewhat clumsily that there is a parallel between the bucolic virtue of classical philosophy and the apprehension of divine knowledge.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the parallels which have been drawn between the *De vita solitaria* and monastic thought, Fritz Schalk has nevertheless accurately summarised consensus in arguing that the Christian content of Petrarch's *solitudo* is subordinate to its more direct Stoic and Epicurean inspiration.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>20</sup> Tripet, *Pétrarque ou la connaissance de soi*, 49.

<sup>21</sup> G. Martellotti, 'Introduzione,' in *Prose*, vii–xxii, here xv.

<sup>22</sup> Constable, 'Petrarch and Monasticism,' 63–4.

<sup>23</sup> Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 19–20; *The Poet as Philosopher*, 84–9.

<sup>24</sup> Bosco, *Petrarca*, 110.

<sup>25</sup> Schalk, 'Zu Petrarca's "De vita solitaria" (Buch II),' 261.

While Schalk and others acknowledged that there may well be certain discreet parallels which can be observed between Petrarch's solitude and monastic—and even Augustinian—thought, scholars of this period generally thought that the *De vita solitaria*'s emphasis on rural seclusion, the company of friends, and literary endeavour mark it out as having been composed primarily under the influence of Stoic and Epicurean thought. Solitude, it is held, is conceived in direct imitation of a classical *vita contemplativa*, overlaid with the admiration of the countryside and hatred of the city which characterised the moralising satires of the Lucilian tradition.<sup>26</sup> Not merely were monastic influences viewed as adjuncts to the work's classical tendencies, but the effect of St. Augustine's theology on the terms in which Petrarch conceived of *solitudo* were thought to be decidedly incidental.

In more recent years, Petrarch's debt to St. Augustine's thought in the *De vita solitaria* has come to be viewed more positively. A variety of different Augustinian parallels have been suggested, some more compelling than others. Francesco Serpagli, for example, has suggested an intriguing connection between the *De vita solitaria* and Augustine's *De moribus ecclesiae*,<sup>27</sup> while other scholars have attempted to identify the contrast between the *occupatus* and the *solitarius* more directly with Augustinian lines of argument, albeit without any consensus having been achieved. While Armando Maggi, for example, has contended that '[t]he primary inspiration for the *De vita solitaria* is Augustine's *De vera religione*',<sup>28</sup> Conrad Rawski has, by contrast, suggested that Petrarch's hypothetical

<sup>26</sup> For a useful introduction to the Lucilian tradition of satire, see M. Coffey, *Roman Satire*, 2nd ed. (London, 1989), 35–148.

<sup>27</sup> F. Serpagli, *Prolegomeni al "De vita solitaria" di Petrarca* (Parma, 1967).

<sup>28</sup> A. Maggi, '“You will be my solitude.” Solitude as prophesy. *De vita solitaria*,' in *Petrarch. A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. V. Kirkham and A. Maggi (Chicago and London, 2009), 179–96, here 181. It is rather unfortunate that Maggi's paper—perhaps as a result of its need to provide a brief, overall survey of an extremely complex work—is not only fragmentary in nature, but also fails to offer a comparative analysis of the various different influences which could have inspired the contrast between the *occupatus* and the *solitarius*. As it stands, the mere affirmation of a connection between the *De vita solitaria* and the *De vera religione* is not altogether convincing, and it is further weakened by the failure to examine the implications of Petrarch's reference to 'truth' in greater detail. Note also P. van Moos, 'Les solitudes de Pétrarque. Liberté intellectuelle et activisme urbain dans la crise du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle,' *Rassegna europea di letteratura italiana* 7 (1996): 23–58; I. Tufano, 'La notte, la paura, il peccato: Il ritratto dell' 'occupatus' nel "De vita solitaria",' *Rassegna europea di letteratura italiana* 22 (2003): 37–52.

archetypes can be traced back to the *De civitate Dei*.<sup>29</sup> But while numerous interesting connections have been observed between St. Augustine's theology and Petrarch's treatment of *solitudo*, no single reading of the Augustinian elements of Petrarch's treatise has gained general acceptance, and scholars continue to hold to the view that the *De vita solitaria* was inspired primarily by classical literature and philosophy. Augustinian influences on Petrarch's conception of solitude are, in general, thought to pale by comparison to his apparent use of tropes borrowed from Stoic and Epicurean thought. A particularly representative example of this line of thought is found in Karl Enenkel's commentary on the first book of the *De vita solitaria*.<sup>30</sup> For Enenkel, Augustine's influence can be felt in many respects, as, for example, in Petrarch's treatment of friendship<sup>31</sup> and the role accorded to Christ in the life of solitude,<sup>32</sup> and there is no doubt that the *De vera religione* in particular exerted a considerable impact on the shape of *solitudo* in Petrarch's mind. But in Enenkel's interpretation, Augustine nevertheless played second fiddle to classical and medieval literature on the *vita contemplativa*. In contrast to the lightly-sketched readings offered by Maggi and Rawski, Enenkel contends that while the impact of medieval texts such as the Pseudo-Basilian *De laude vitae solitariae* can be felt, the typology of the contrast between the *occupatus* and the *solitarius* was primarily Senecan in inspiration, and that Augustine's direct effect on the structure of this central theme was limited.<sup>33</sup> On those occasions on which Petrarch seems to place emphasis on the authority of St. Augustine in particular, and sought to explore the connections between Augustinian theology and classical thought, Enenkel argues that the importance attached to the bishop of Hippo's words was overshadowed by Petrarch's preoccupation with ancient literature and moral philosophy.<sup>34</sup>

Although it is admittedly difficult—if not impossible—to dispute the fact that the *De vita solitaria* consciously plays with classical tropes in a

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<sup>29</sup> C. Rawski, Review of Petrarch, *De vita solitaria*, *Buch I*, ed. and comm. K. A. E. Enenkel, *Renaissance Quarterly* 46/1 (Spring 1993): 153–55, esp. 153: 'Elaborating with 'well-turned phrases' a model which, I think, he found in *De civitate Dei* iv, 3, Petrarch adopts Augustine's reduction of classes of complex notions (Augustine's *altisona vocabula*) to the core image of two men of contrary habits, one *occupatus* (Augustine's *praedivitus*), the other *solitarius* (Augustine's *pauper vel potius mediocris*), as a heuristic device of sorts...'

<sup>30</sup> *De vita solitaria*, *Buch I*, ed. and comm. K. A. E. Enenkel (Leiden, 1990). Hereafter, this edition will be referred to as 'Enenkel'.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 572–3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 460–1.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, *ibid.*, 157–76, 199–200, 206–22.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 468–9.

number of different ways, there is nevertheless good reason to entertain the possibility that St. Augustine's influence on the nature of Petrarch's *solitudo* has been underestimated. Quite apart from the parallel which Petrarch drew between the *De vita solitaria* and the *De otio religioso*, the manner in which Petrarch began his discussion of solitude seems to evoke the spirit of St. Augustine's early theology in a fashion reminiscent of the *Secretum* and the *De otio religioso*, and appears to be at something of a distance from Stoic and Epicurean thought. As Maggi has observed,<sup>35</sup> it is striking that both the prefatory epistle and the first paragraphs of the first book describe the contrast between the solitary man and the enemy of solitude in terms of the opposition between truth and virtue on the one hand, and falsehood, error, and pleasure on the other.<sup>36</sup> Petrarch's solitude is, from the very beginning, associated with the proximity of the self to God, self-knowledge, and companionship, and with the freedom of the soul's 'powerful wings' from earthly enticements.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in embarking upon his comparison between the *occupatus* and the *solitarius*, Petrarch affirmed that it was not so much solitude which he sought to praise as the good things that are proper to it, namely, leisure (*otium*), and freedom from worry.<sup>38</sup>

In the same vein, it is worth noting that the tendency to attribute certain themes in the *De vita solitaria*—such as the contrast between the *occupatus* and the *solitarius*, and the emphasis on rustic seclusion—to Petrarch's reading of the ancient classics is founded more on apparent structural and stylistic similarities than on definitive conceptual connections, and the *fact* of Petrarch's use of a particular classical trope is often given more credence than the precise manner in which he used it. As with the *Secretum*, the 'question of attribution' deserves to be brought to bear, and it is important to ask how far Petrarch's manipulation of apparently classical tropes in the *De vita solitaria* reflects a genuine willingness to reproduce elements of classical philosophy in an uncritical manner. As

<sup>35</sup> Maggi, "You will be my solitude." Solitude as prophesy,' 181.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>37</sup> See n. 4, above; see also *De vita solitaria*, Z I, i, 1; P I, i; *Prose*, 296: '... etsi enim voluptas tenacissimo visco illita et blandis ac dulcibus plena sit laqueis, fortes tamen circa terram alas detinere diutius non potest.'

<sup>38</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, i, 3; P I, i; *Prose*, 298–300: 'Visus autem sum michi facillime felicitatem solitudinis ostensurus, si simul frequentie dolores miseriasque monstravero, percurrens actus hominum quos vel hec vita pacificos atque tranquillos, vel illa turbidos atque sollicitos et anhelantes habet. Unum enim est his omnibus fundamentum: hanc vitam leto otio, illam tristi negotio incumbere... Neque enim solitudinis solum nomen, sed que in solitudine bona sunt laudo.'

we have already had cause to observe, Petrarch was more than able to adapt themes and images drawn from ancient literature to purposes quite different from those intended by their original authors, and was particularly adept at exploring the potential for marrying elements of classical thought to a moral theology derived from the early works of St. Augustine. That the 'question of attribution' can be brought to bear on the *De vita solitaria* is recommended not only by Petrarch's criticisms of classical authors,<sup>39</sup> but also by his treatment of apparent parallels between Ciceronian and Augustinian thought. At Z I, iv, 8, for example, Petrarch defends the authority of Cicero, *Tusc.* I, xvi, 38 by arguing that St. Augustine had approached the composition of the *De vera religione* from the same basic principle.<sup>40</sup> Although Enenkel uses a marginal note in Petrarch's copy of the *De vera religione* to suggest that this reveals a tendency to view Cicero's dialogue as the greater authority,<sup>41</sup> it seems more plausible to contend that Petrarch viewed Cicero's sentiments as authoritative because he found them commensurate with St. Augustine's moral theology; in other words, because he read the *Tusculan Disputations* through the lens of the bishop of Hippo's early theology, and recognised the importance of Stoic philosophy to the development of the saint's moral programme.

A re-evaluation of the role played by Augustinian theology in the *De vita solitaria* not merely affects the manner in which its precise relationship to the *De otio religioso* is understood, but also impacts significantly upon how its place in the history of Renaissance thought is viewed.

Perhaps rather surprisingly given Petrarch's later fame as the author of the *Canzoniere*, the *De vita solitaria* was one of his most popular works

<sup>39</sup> E.g. *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 1; P vii; *Prose*, 362–4; quoting Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.* X, iii, 22–5; *De vita solitaria*, Z II, viii, 1; P II, xiii; *Prose*, 534; referring to Seneca, *Ep.* x, 1. These passages will be discussed at greater length shortly.

<sup>40</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 8; P I, v; *Prose*, 352: 'Quod si et nobis accidit et consilium optamus, idem nobis audiendus est Cicero, non quod alii precipue ex nostris desint, cum Augustinus ex hoc maxime librum *Vere religionis* michi texuisse videatur; sed iuvat in re nostra peregrinum, ut ita dixerim, hominem audire, presertim cum unus idemque locus sit ubi et vulnus aperuit et medicamenta composuit. Ait enim: "Magni autem est ingenii revocare mentem a sensibus, et cogitationem a consuetudine abducere." Quoting Cicero, *Tusc.* I, xvi, 28, but giving 'revocare' for Cicero's 'sevocare'.

<sup>41</sup> Enenkel, 468–9, referring to MS Paris Bibl. Nat. lat. 2201, f.23v: 'Ingredienti libri huius materiam prodesse poterit plurimum sententiam illam habere pre oculis, quam etsi non Cristianus, in ceteris tamen magnus et singularis vir, Cicero, scripsit in Tusculano, libro I, errores temporum suorum perosus, his verbis: "Nichil enim animo videre poterant, ad oculos omnia referebant. Magni autem est ingenii revocare mentem a sensibus et cogitationem a consuetudine abducere." Cum similibus eiusdem vel aliorum philosophorum sententiis.'

during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Over 120 partial and complete manuscript copies of the treatise survive from this period,<sup>42</sup> and a comparative analysis of surviving copies of Petrarch's works reveals that the *De vita solitaria* was the most frequently transcribed text after the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, the *Historia Griseldis*, and the *Psalmi penitenciales*.<sup>43</sup> Copies of Petrarch's praise of the solitary life were certainly owned by Francesco Zabarella, Pier Paolo Vergerio,<sup>44</sup> and Humphrey, duke of Gloucester,<sup>45</sup> and there has been some suggestion that Coluccio Salutati may also have owned a copy.<sup>46</sup> The work was, moreover, referenced by John Fisher in his *De unica magdalena*,<sup>47</sup> and John Lydgate mentioned the treatise by name while heaping praise on Petrarch in *The Fall of Princes*.<sup>48</sup> This popularity even continued for some time after the advent of printing, and no fewer than seven editions of the *De vita solitaria* were published between 1473 and 1515, compared to four complete editions of the *De remediis utriusque fortune* in the same period, and nine partial editions of the same text between 1460 and 1515.<sup>49</sup>

Despite the apparent popularity of the *De vita solitaria* during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, scholars have been comparatively loath to examine the impact of Petrarch's treatise with anything but the lightest touch. Where it is considered, the reception of this work is, for the most part, described in rather general terms, and it is striking how little attempt has been made to distinguish between the fact of Petrarch's

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<sup>42</sup> Enenkel lists 126 partial and complete manuscripts of the *De vita solitaria* in the 'Vortwort zur Textausgabe' to his edition: Enenkel, 42–51.

<sup>43</sup> N. Mann, 'Petrarch and Humanism: The Paradox of Posterity,' in *Francesco Petrarca, Citizen of the World*, ed. Bernardo, 287–99, here 289. It is striking that more manuscript copies of the *De vita solitaria* survive from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries than of either the *Secretum* or the *Bucolicum carmen*.

<sup>44</sup> Zabarella bequeathed his copies of Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*, *De remediis utriusque fortune*, *Africa*, *De otio religioso*, *Epistole metrice*, and *Secretum* to Vergerio. See Billanovich, *Petrarca Letterato*, 381; N. Mann, 'Arnold Geilhoven: An Early Disciple of Petrarch in the Low Countries,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 32 (1969): 73–108, here 75–6.

<sup>45</sup> R. Weiss, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1957), 177; R. Coogan, 'Petrarch's Latin Prose and the English Renaissance,' *Studies in Philology* 68/3 (July 1971): 270–91, here 271.

<sup>46</sup> There is reason to suppose, however, that MS Bibl. Apost. Vat. Lat. 3357, which contains the *De vita solitaria*, and which has been linked with Salutati's library, did not in fact belong to the Florentine humanist: Ullman, *Humanism*, 207; *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 139.

<sup>47</sup> Coogan, 'Petrarch's Latin Prose,' 278.

<sup>48</sup> John Lydgate, *The Fall of Princes*, ed. H. Bergen, 4 vols. (London, 1924), 2:476.

<sup>49</sup> Coogan, 'Petrarch's Latin Prose,' 272.



praise of solitude and the precise manner in which he approached the question. Summarising the expansiveness of much general opinion, Armando Maggi, for example, has observed that '[t]he entire European meditation on the meaning of solitude, from Montaigne to Pascal, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and Tolstoy finds in Petrarch's treatise its first representative.'<sup>50</sup> The origin of this rather sweeping judgement has its root in the contention that the *De vita solitaria* is an essentially 'secular' (as opposed to religious or monastic) treatment of solitude. In his brief survey of humanistic treatments of the active and contemplative lives, for example, Paul Oskar Kristeller contended that the importance of the *De vita solitaria* lay in Petrarch's 'transfer of the ideal of the solitary life from the monk and hermit to the lay scholar.'<sup>51</sup> Consequently, Kristeller argued that while Petrarch's work stood in contrast to the praise of the active life found in Salutati's *De nobilitate legum et medicinae*, and the writings of Leonardo Bruni, Matteo Palmieri, and Leon Battista Alberti, the text constituted the first example of a key theme in Renaissance literature that was later developed by figures such as Ermolao Barbaro, Antonio Galateo, and Montaigne.<sup>52</sup> It is in this same manner that Trinkaus also views the *De vita solitaria*. Barely deigning to examine Petrarch's argument itself, Trinkaus treats the treatise merely as an extension of the *De otio religioso*, and presents it as having blurred 'the difference between layman and regular clergy'.<sup>53</sup> As such, the *De vita solitaria* could be compared both with Salutati's *De seculo et religione* and with Lorenzo Valla's writings, and could be seen as having contributed 'to an eventual challenge to the notion that the professional religious were inherently more meritorious or more pious than lay Christians.'<sup>54</sup> It is, indeed, extremely rare for the specific characteristics of Petrarch's praise of the solitary life to be examined in any more detail in relation to the wider reception of the *De vita solitaria*. A rare example is found in Hans Baron's examination of the impact of Franciscan poverty and civic wealth on the development of humanistic thought, but even in this case, the focus is narrow, and little

<sup>50</sup> Maggi, '“You will be my solitude.” Solitude as prophesy,' 179–80. The comparison with Montaigne is also found, for instance, in Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 93.

<sup>51</sup> P. O. Kristeller, 'The Active and Contemplative Life in Renaissance Humanism,' in *Arbeit, Musse, Meditation. Betrachtungen zur Vita activa und Vita contemplativa*, ed. B. Vickers (Zurich, 1985), 133–52, here 139. Note also P. A. Lombardo, 'Vita Activa versus Vita Contemplativa in Petrarch and Salutati,' *Italica* 59/2 (Summer 1982), 83–92, here 86.

<sup>52</sup> Kristeller, 'The Active and Contemplative Life in Renaissance Humanism,' 139–40.

<sup>53</sup> Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 19.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

attempt is made to consider the relationship between Petrarch's argumentation and sources and later humanistic treatments of comparable themes. In his article, Baron contended that while Petrarch's rejection of the Stoic ideal of *paupertas* had echoes in Lombardo della Seta's *De bono solitudinis* and Antonio da Romagno's defence of poverty, this aspect of the *De vita solitaria* had considerably less impact on later generations.<sup>55</sup> Baron, however, neglects to examine the concept of solitude as a whole, and avoids evaluating other influences on Petrarch's understanding of the solitary life.

The question of the *De vita solitaria*'s relationship to later thought is clearly closely related to the details of Petrarch's defence of solitude and to the sources to which he turned in composing his treatise. By re-evaluating the contribution of St. Augustine's theology to the argumentation of the *De vita solitaria* and to the identity of *solitudo* itself, however, it will be possible not only to understand the 'humanistic' character of this text more fully, but also to uncover precisely how fully it participated either in the *vita activa/vita contemplativa* debate, or in the Renaissance re-assessment of the relative merit of the religious and secular lives. In addition to casting further light on the nature of his engagement with classical literature, a fuller understanding of the Augustinian quality of Petrarch's treatise will permit a closer comparison with works such as Salutati's *De seculo et religione* and *De nobilitate legum et medicinae*, and the writings of Lorenzo Valla.

The better to uncover the Augustinian character of Petrarch's treatise, this chapter will first offer a critical examination of the oft-repeated contention that the *De vita solitaria* is, in its conception and form, a work which was composed under the influence of classical archetypes. Comparing Petrarch's exploration of the *occupatus-solitarius* theme with Stoic and Epicurean thought, it will highlight the respects in which the defining features of his understanding of solitude differed from that found in ancient literature. Turning then to the 'hidden life of solitude', the search for alternative sources of inspiration will begin, and an analysis of the connections which link Petrarch's *solitudo animi* to the early theology of St. Augustine will be offered, before his relationship with the countryside is considered. This accomplished, the sources and argumentation of the *De vita solitaria* will be related to our earlier reading of the *De otio religioso*, and the concepts of *otium* and *solitudo* will be compared. In a final

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<sup>55</sup> Baron, 'Franciscan Poverty,' 11ff.

section, Petrarch's treatise will be placed in relation to later humanistic thought.

## 2. Stoic and Epicurean Themes in the *De Vita Solitaria*: the Background

There is, indeed, much to recommend the suggestion that the classical notion of a *vita contemplativa* provided the inspiration for Petrarch's conception of *solitudo* in the *De vita solitaria*. With the slight exception of Cicero's notion of the ideal statesman,<sup>56</sup> Stoics and Epicureans during the late Roman Republic and early Empire were united in advocating the pursuit of a *vita contemplativa*, dedicated to friendship and philosophy, in preference to a *vita activa*, devoted to *negotium* and *occupationes*.

For the Epicureans, it was fruitless to look for security in public affairs.<sup>57</sup> Since the quest for public acclaim and civic prominence required men to depend on others from whom no loyalty could be expected, an active life in the city—vulnerable to the fickleness of fate—was fraught with worry and fear.<sup>58</sup> Although Juvenal distanced himself from Epicureanism in *Sat.* XIII,<sup>59</sup> Umbricius' complaints about the corruption and disrepute of Rome in *Sat.* III<sup>60</sup> and the invective against the ambition and avarice of the city in *Sat.* X are reflective of this strand of Epicurean thought.<sup>61</sup> Faced with the uncertainties and vices of the city, it was far better for the Epicurean to withdraw to the countryside.<sup>62</sup> There, a man could dedicate himself to philosophy and could cultivate strong friendships in a beautiful and peaceful environment where fear and concern would have no place.<sup>63</sup> Through philosophy, which would allow him to minimise the influence of the body, he could understand how little he really needs, learn how to enjoy what he has, and free himself from the fear of loss.<sup>64</sup> In friendship, he could find the only secure form of human contact and great pleasure.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Cicero, *De re publica*, I, vi, 11; I, viii, 13; I, ix, 14f.

<sup>57</sup> Diogenes Laertius, X, 143, xiv; cf. Plutarch, *Moralia*, XIV, lxxv.

<sup>58</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus, XXX, iv, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Juvenal, *Sat.* XIII, 121–3. For an interesting and useful discussion of this point, see G. Highet, 'The Philosophy of Juvenal,' *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 80 (1949): 254–70.

<sup>60</sup> Juvenal, *Sat.* III, 164–231.

<sup>61</sup> Juvenal, *Sat.* X, 12–27, 56–113.

<sup>62</sup> Diogenes Laertius, X, 143, xiv.

<sup>63</sup> Martial, *Epigrams*, I, lxxxvi, ll. 8–10; II, xc; II, liii, ll. 3–10.

<sup>64</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* viii, 7.

<sup>65</sup> Cicero, *De finibus*, I, xx, 67–70; Seneca, *Ep.* ix, 8–9.

For the later Stoics, who placed great emphasis on the exercise of ‘muscular’ virtues and the doctrine of the will, such a line of reasoning was understandably anathema,<sup>66</sup> but the attraction of a *vita contemplativa* was still regarded as valid. Having decried the deleterious effects of towns like Baiae in his letters,<sup>67</sup> Seneca recommended a solitary life of study<sup>68</sup> initially on the grounds that it was the surest means of remaining focussed on virtue.<sup>69</sup> Only when all *occupationes* had been cast aside, and the depraved ways of the town left behind did Seneca believe that it would be possible for a man to engage freely in the philosophical enquiry which would lead to wisdom and virtue.<sup>70</sup> Away from the thronging crowd, exercising moderation and continence,<sup>71</sup> and in the company of books and good friends, a man could come to understand the concatenation of all creation, and hence know both the good and the fallacy of fearing death. Conscious that critics might accuse him of diverging from the path of virtue and duty laid down by Zeno and Chrysippus,<sup>72</sup> however, he added that the solitary man’s philosophical inquiries could be of benefit to the whole of humanity and thus be seen as a dutiful parallel to participation in public affairs.<sup>73</sup> Surrounded by the peace of the countryside, a wise man could not only be free of the distractions of vice, but could also serve the wider human community.

Petrarch’s description of the circumstances in which the *De vita solitaria* was composed, and his treatment of solitude in some of his letters and metrical epistles from the same period are apparently redolent of Stoic and Epicurean thought.<sup>74</sup> Seemingly framed around a contrast between the vice and instability of the city, and the peace of rural seclusion in the company of books and friends, the image of solitude which emerges appears to reproduce many of the features of the *vita contemplativa* common to these two philosophical schools.

<sup>66</sup> E.g. Cicero, *De re publica*, I, vi, 10–11.

<sup>67</sup> E.g. Seneca, *Ep.* li.

<sup>68</sup> Seneca, *De otio*, I, 1.

<sup>69</sup> Seneca, *De otio*, I, 1. See also *Ep.* viii, 7–8, in which the overlap between Stoic and Epicurean thought is evident, although Seneca’s divergence is also made plain.

<sup>70</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* lxxii, 3; liii, 9. On the sometimes vague relationship between wisdom and virtue, see, for example, Seneca, *Ep.* lxxxix, 7–8.

<sup>71</sup> E.g. Seneca, *Ep.* xvii, 3–5; xviii, 2–7, 9–11.

<sup>72</sup> Seneca, *De otio*, II, 1.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 1–2.

<sup>74</sup> For an interesting introduction to Petrarch’s own pursuit of the life of solitude, see J. Petrie, ‘Petrarch *solitarius*,’ in *Petrarch in Britain. Interpreters, Imitators and Translators over 700 Years*, ed. M. McLaughlin, L. Panizza, and P. Hainsworth, Proceedings of the British Academy 146 (Oxford, 2007), 29–38.

The prefatory letter to Philippe de Cabassoles indicates that the *De vita solitaria* was intended to celebrate the solitude which Petrarch and the bishop of Cavaillon had enjoyed together at Vacluse in early 1346.<sup>75</sup> Although few details of the visit are given in the text, an insight into Petrarch's apprehension of that solitude is provided by a metrical epistle—the *Exul ab Italia*<sup>76</sup>—sent to Philippe apparently by way of invitation in January of that year.<sup>77</sup> The contrast between city and countryside is immediately made apparent. In the opening lines, Petrarch reveals that he had come to Vacluse 'partimque volens, partimque coactus', having been driven out of Italy by 'furiis civilibus' in Parma.<sup>78</sup> Despite the proximity of Avignon, he found the Provençal valley a delightful refuge.<sup>79</sup> In Vacluse, he claims, are sylvan glades, streams and all the leisure of the countryside.<sup>80</sup> Everything a man could need can be found near the source of the Sorgue. Neither conflict nor the confusions of a lawsuit disturb the peace which even the weary Muses had seen fit to enjoy.<sup>81</sup> At Vacluse, loyal friends are all that Petrarch lacked.<sup>82</sup>

The beginning of the *Exul ab Italia* has echoes of Propertius,<sup>83</sup> but appears most strongly to recall Horace, *Sat.* II, 6, and, pregnant with the suggestion

<sup>75</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z Foreword; P 'Ad Philippum Cavallicesem Episcopum'; *Prose*, 290–2: 'solitarie scilicet otioseque vite preconium, quam cum sepe olim solus, tum precipue nuper mecum brevi quidem nec nisi dierum quindecim spatio degustasti.'

<sup>76</sup> *Ep. Met. Var.* 3; text in *Poesie minori del Petrarca*, ed. D. Rossetti, 3 vols. (Milan, 1829–1834), 2: 60–6. Rossetti erroneously numbers it *Ep. Met.* I, 6 on the basis of the editions of 1554 and 1581. There is a readable English translation in *Petrarch at Vacluse: Letters in Verse and Prose*, trans. E. H. Wilkins (Chicago, 1958), 179ff.

<sup>77</sup> On the dating of the *Exul ab Italia*, see E. H. Wilkins, 'Petrarch's *Exul ab Italia*,' *Speculum* 38/3 (July, 1963): 453–460. See also E. H. Wilkins, *The "Epistolae Metricae" of Petrarch: A Manual*, *Studi Eruditi*, 8 (Rome, 1956), 12, 16.

<sup>78</sup> On 23 February 1345, Petrarch had fled from Parma. The city, the lordship of which Azzo da Correggio had recently sold to Obizzo d'Este, was at that time besieged by the forces of the envious Marquis of Mantua and the Visconti. Faced with mounting civic unrest, Petrarch feared for his safety, partly due to his friendship with Azzo. Wilkins, 'Petrarch's *Exul ab Italia*', 453–4, 457–8; cf. *Fam.* V, 10.

<sup>79</sup> *Ep. Met. Var.* 3, ll. 1–2.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 3.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 8–14.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 4: 'Sed fidi comites absunt vultusque sereni'.

<sup>83</sup> Jennifer Petrie has drawn attention to Propertius' dream that he 'lived on Mount Helicon, and was led by Apollo to a cave where the Muses taught him his vocation as a love poet.' Propertius, II, xiii, 3–4; III, v, 19–20. J. Petrie, *Petrarch: The Augustan Poets, the Italian Tradition and the Canzoniere* (Dublin, 1983), 88. It seems, however, that the emphasis on material satisfaction present in the *Exul ab Italia* is absent from Propertius and the parallel is somewhat imperfect. For Petrarch's knowledge of Propertius, unusual for the fourteenth century, see de Nohac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, 1: 170–3; B. L. Ullman, 'The Manuscripts of Propertius,' *Classical Philology*, 6/3, (July 1911): 282–301; E. H. Wilkins, 'Notes on Petrarch,' *MLN* 32/4 (1917): 193–200, esp. 193–96. It is interesting to note that

of a comparison between Petrarch's house at Vacluse and the satirist's desires, seems to hint strongly that the solitude which inspired the *De vita solitaria* was conceived as a classical *vita contemplativa*. Petrarch has what Horace always wished for—a house near the source of a perennial stream, close to a little woodland<sup>84</sup>—and it is striking that, like the country mouse in the fable,<sup>85</sup> he is content to be away from the insidious life of the city. His fare is simple—recalling the dinner offered to the town mouse<sup>86</sup>—but, as we have seen, he has everything that he needs to live comfortably. In the company of the Muses (which indicates the importance of literary endeavour to this rural retreat) he is free from ambition<sup>87</sup> and wants for nothing except the companionship of a good friend, a deficiency which he hoped would soon be remedied.

Petrarch almost seems to present himself as the fulfilment of Horace's ideal<sup>88</sup> and this appears to add weight to the sense of parallelism between solitude and the *vita contemplativa*. Although Horace and Petrarch each removed themselves 'from the city to a mountain citadel',<sup>89</sup> Petrarch has the sense not to ask for anything beyond the presence of a friend. Unlike Horace, he does not ask for his livestock to be fattened and does not invite the gods to protect him against change.<sup>90</sup> Since he has no wish to return to the city, he has no reason to sigh for the countryside or wonder when he will have the opportunity to be among his books again.<sup>91</sup>

The contrast between *rus* and *urbs* so important to Stoic and Epicurean notions of the *vita contemplativa* is similarly visible in other letters written during the composition of the *De vita solitaria*. In a letter written on 15 February 1353, for example, Petrarch invited Niccolò di Paolo dei Vetuli, bishop of Viterbo, to join him and Socrates (Ludwig van Kempen) in Vacluse and, as in the earlier metrical epistle to Philippe de Cabassoles, uses the most vivid images to describe the solitude into which the

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Petrarch regarded Propertius as one of the four great love poets of antiquity (alongside Catullus, Tibullus and Ovid), on which see *Fam.* IX, 4; *Triumphus cupidinis*, IV, 19–24; *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69.

<sup>84</sup> Horace, *Sat.* II, 6, 1–3.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 115–117.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 83–89.

<sup>87</sup> *Ep. Met. Var.* 3, ll. 8–10; c.f. Horace, *Sat.* II, 6, l. 18.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. the relationship between Horace's country mouse and the 'nagging remorse' of Lucretius' lover. Rudd, *The Satires of Horace*, 251; Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, 4.1131ff.

<sup>89</sup> Horace, *Sat.* II, 6, 16.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–15.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 60–62.

prelate would be welcomed. 'I know of nothing,' Petrarch wrote towards the end of the letter,

which can compare to this solitude, in which our Socrates and I are most eagerly awaiting you. Supported by divine labour, you will easily be able to reinvigorate your body and clear your mind. For here there is no threatening tyrant and no intemperate citizenry; [you will not find] the biting language of a frenzied detractor, nor anger, nor a faction of citizens, nor complaints, nor traps, nor noise, nor the clamour of men, nor the clangor of trumpets, nor the crash of arms; what is more, [there is] no avarice, no envy, absolutely no ambition, no home for pride to be approached with fear; [there is] but joy, simplicity, freedom, and the happy state between wealth and poverty; [there is] but sober, humble, and gentle rusticity, a harmless people, an unarmed peasantry, a pacific region, the bishop of which [Philippe de Cabassoles]—the best of men, a true friend to good people—will have you as a brother, since he has us as sons.<sup>92</sup>

Here, solitude is free from the fearful tribulations, worrisome divisions, and unpleasant noises of the city. Far from the avarice, envy, ambition, and pride which stalk urban streets, Petrarch and Ludwig van Kempen enjoy peace and happiness by following a moderate and humble way of life in each other's company. Their rectitude is associated with and reflected by the simplicity of their rustic existence.

In a letter written to Guido Sette from San Columbano on 21 October 1353, Petrarch developed the contrast between *rus* and *urbs* yet further.<sup>93</sup> The beauty of his surroundings put him in mind of Vacluse and, sustaining the parallel, he juxtaposes the troubles of Milan with the peace of San Columbano. The splendid environment<sup>94</sup> is 'indeed the place of peace, the home of leisure, the repose of labours, the lodging of tranquillity, the

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<sup>92</sup> *Fam.* XVI, 6, 20–22: 'nichil quod sciam, posse nunc cum hac solitudine comparari, in qua te Socrates noster et ego cupidissime expectamus, ubi facile divina ope suffultus et corpus recreare et serenare animum queas. Nullus hic tyrannus minax, nullus civis insolens; non obtrectatoris rabidi lingua mordacior, non ira, non civilis factio, non querimonie, non insidie, non clamor, non strepitus hominum, non tubarum clangor, non fragor armorum; nulla preterea avaritia, nullus livor, nulla prorsus ambitio, nullum superbi limen cum tremore subeundum; sed gaudium et simplicitas et libertas et inter divitias pauperiemque status optabilis; sed sobria et humilis et mansueta rusticitas, gens innocua, plebs inermis, regio pacifica, cuius presul vir optimus et bonorum amicissimus consequens erit ut te in fratrem habeat, quoniam nos habet in filios.' Cf. *Fam.* VI, 3, written to Giovanni Colonna on 30 May 1342.

<sup>93</sup> *Fam.* XVII, 5. On Petrarch's visit to San Columbano, see E. H. Wilkins, *Petrarch's Eight Years in Milan* (Cambridge MA, 1958), 41f.

<sup>94</sup> *Fam.* XVII, 5, 7.



workshop of solitude.<sup>95</sup> It is quiet, safe and free, quite distant from the concerns of the city, almost the perfect place in which to rest the mind and give rein to other sweet occupations.<sup>96</sup> Set in such a place, and utterly removed from the disturbances of the town, a country dwelling would, for Petrarch, be 'a fortunate, heavenly, angelic dwelling,'<sup>97</sup> and he felt that he wrote not so much in the guise of a poet or philosopher, as with the feeling of a king.<sup>98</sup> Petrarch's imagery seems to have many obvious parallels in classical literature. It recalls, for example, Seneca's observations on Baiae,<sup>99</sup> and Virgil's celebration of the country-dweller's life in the second Georgic,<sup>100</sup> but also invites comparison with Martial's *Epigrams* and Juvenal's *Satires*.<sup>101</sup> The contrast between city and countryside, between the sins which come from an involvement with the affairs of others and the good which springs from simplicity and self-sufficiency, however, are strikingly evocative of Stoic and Epicurean conceptions of the *vita contemplativa*.

<sup>95</sup> *Fam.* XVII, 5, 4: 'vere rus illud locus est pacis, otii domus, requies laborum, tranquillitatis hospitium officina.'

<sup>96</sup> *Fam.* XVII, 5, 6.

<sup>97</sup> *Fam.* XVII, 5, 7: '... habitatio est felix celestis angelica ...'

<sup>98</sup> *Fam.* XVII, 5, 15.

<sup>99</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* li, 4; cf. *Fam.* XVI, 6, 20.

<sup>100</sup> Virgil, *Georgics*, II, 458–540, esp. 490–99. On the connection between Virgil, *Georgics*, II and the *De vita solitaria*, see L. Panizza, 'Active and Contemplative in Lorenzo Valla: The Fusion of Opposites,' in *Arbeit, Musse, Meditation*, ed. Vickers, 181–223, here 192–201. A great deal of ink has been spilt over this episode from *Georgics*, II. Seeing it as the key to understanding the programme of the whole of the *Georgics*, scholars have been divided between 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic' readings. Despite these divisions, however, it remains true—as Leah Kronenberg has observed—that 'most readings have focused on understanding several presumed contrasts highlighted by the passage: the contrast between the ideal and the real country life, [and] the contrast between the active and the contemplative life ...' L. J. Kronenberg, 'The Poet's Fiction: Virgil's Praise of the Farmer, Philosopher, and Poet at the End of "Georgics II",' *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 100 (2000): 341–360. For interesting perspectives on the *vita contemplativa* and the countryside in the second Georgic, see, for example, P. J. Davis, 'Virgil's *Georgics* and the Pastoral Ideal,' in *Virgil's Ascræan Song: Ramus Essays on the Georgics*, ed. A. J. Boyle (Melbourne, 1979), 22–33; M. C. J. Putnam, *Virgil's Poem of the Earth: Studies in the Georgics* (Princeton, 1979), 142–164; J. Strauss Clay, 'The Argument at the End of Virgil's Second Georgic,' *Philologus* 120 (1976): 232–45; L. P. Wilkinson, *The Georgics of Virgil: A Critical Survey* (Oklahoma, 1997), esp. 92–3; R. F. Thomas, 'Vestiga Ruris: Urbane Rusticity in Virgil's *Georgics*,' *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97 (1995): 197–214. For an introduction to Petrarch's knowledge of Virgil's bucolic verse, see de Nohac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, 1147–8.

<sup>101</sup> For Petrarch's knowledge of Juvenal, see de Nohac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, 1186–7. De Nohac notes (1186) that the majority of Petrarch's citations from Juvenal are anonymous. It would not be unexpected for unattributed echoes to appear in the letters. De Nohac's assertion that '[Pétrarque] l'imité jusque dans ses œuvres italiennes' is, I think, open to some question.

If the solitude which Petrarch depicted in his letters to Guido Sette and Niccolò di Paolo dei Vetuli seems to have the character of a *vita contemplativa* defined in opposition to the hateful vice of an urban *vita activa* in the manner of classical authors, it is also noteworthy for its distinctive activities, which are again redolent of Stoic and Epicurean thought. In the later part of his letter to the bishop of Viterbo, Petrarch attempted to entice his prospective guest to Vacluse by offering a more detailed description of the valley itself and went to some length to emphasise its beauty. Evoking the spirit of Virgil's *Georgics* and *Eclogues*<sup>102</sup> in his sensitivity for his natural surroundings,<sup>103</sup> Petrarch described the valley as like an 'earthly Paradise' or the Elysian fields.<sup>104</sup> Peace and tranquillity could be found in abundance and, as he affirmed in a letter to Philippe de Cabasoles written two years earlier, such an enclosed valley was the most perfect environment for study.<sup>105</sup> Although the lifestyle was simple, Petrarch's vast library could provide Niccolò with all the 'riches' that a studious mind could desire, while the setting would allow him to 'converse' freely with the 'saints, philosophers, poets, orators, and historians' of the past.<sup>106</sup> Repose and study are clearly identified. This association is repeated in Petrarch's marginal notes to Virgil's first eclogue in the Codex Ambrosianus. At the very end of the verse, Tityrus tells Meliboeus that he 'might have rested here with me on the green leafage' and draws attention to the simple, but ample fare that they might eat.<sup>107</sup> The passage caught Petrarch's attention and above 'requiescere' he wrote 'otari, studere,' thus indicating a connection between the verdant setting, peace, leisure, and study, and signalling

<sup>102</sup> On the subject of poetry and rusticity in the *Georgics*, see, for example, Kronenberg, 'The Poet's Fiction'; C. M. Perkell, *The Poet's Truth: A Study of the Poet in Virgil's Georgics* (Berkeley, 1989); F. Muecke, 'Poetic Self-Consciousness in *Georgics* II,' in *Virgil's Ascrean Song*, ed. Boyle, 87–101; E. W. Leach, 'Georgics 2 and the Poem,' *Arethusa* 14 (1981): 35–48; D. O. Ross, *Virgil's Elements: Physics and Poetry in the Georgics* (Princeton, 1987). For poetry and rusticity in the *Eclogues*, see, for example, B. F. Dick, 'Vergil's Pastoral Poetic: A Reading of the First Eclogue,' *American Journal of Philology* 91/3 (July 1970): 277–93; R. B. Rutherford, 'Virgil's Poetic Ambitions in *Eclogue* 6,' *Greece and Rome* 2nd ser., 36/1 (April 1989): 42–50. More generally, see, for example, C. Fantazzi, 'Virgilian Pastoral and Roman Love Poetry,' *American Journal of Philology* 87 (1966): 171–91.

<sup>103</sup> *Fam.* XVI, 6, 23.

<sup>104</sup> *Fam.* XVI, 6, 24: 'tale esse ut in Paradiso delitiarum, sicut theologi loquuntur, sive, ut poete, in campis Elysiis natum putes'.

<sup>105</sup> *Fam.* XI, 4, 2.

<sup>106</sup> *Fam.* XVI, 6, 25: 'Postremo, ne singula prosequar, hic tibi quies exoptata et vota tranquillitas et, qua nulle studioso animo divitiae cariores, librorum copia ingens adest... Versaberis cum sanctis cum philosophis cum poetis cum oratoribus cum historicis.'

<sup>107</sup> Virgil, *Ecl.* I, 79–81.

not merely his intimate relationship with Virgil's bucolic verse, but also apparently pointing towards the Stoic association of study and rusticity.<sup>108</sup>

### 3. *Stoic and Epicurean Themes in the De Vita Solitaria: the Occupatus and the Solitarius*

In addition to the contrast between *rus* and *urbs* in the epistolary evidence, and the emphasis on the peace and tranquillity which might be enjoyed in the idyllic surroundings of the countryside, Petrarch's description of the contrast between the *occupatus* and the *solitarius* in the first book of the *De vita solitaria* gives credence to the suggestion that *solitudo* was conceived as a *vita contemplativa* in imitation of Stoic and Epicurean philosophy. Indeed, the terms in which Petrarch erected the contrast at the heart of the first book of the *De vita solitaria* are redolent of Stoic and Epicurean thought. As Martellotti has pointed out, the term 'occupatus', juxtaposed with 'solitarius', is used most frequently in the works of Seneca,<sup>109</sup> and it appears that Petrarch's description of each of these two emblematic figures bear the hallmarks of the Stoic/Epicurean conception of the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* respectively.

As in both Stoic and Epicurean treatments of the *vita activa*, Petrarch's urban *occupatus* is preoccupied with the affairs of others and is involved in every kind of vice. From the very first moment of his waking, he is committed to involving himself with others,<sup>110</sup> driven on by ambition, and focussed entirely on treachery.<sup>111</sup> In this, he is undiscerning and, like Juvenal,<sup>112</sup> Petrarch presents him as capable of thinking about corrupting a bargain, betraying a friend, and seducing the chaste wife of a neighbour equally.<sup>113</sup> This is no more evident than at the courts, where much of his morning is spent. There, before the magistrates, he mixes truth and falsehood to the detriment of others and to his own shame, harming the innocent and furthering the guilty as he does so.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>108</sup> M. L. Lord, 'Petrarch and Vergil's First Eclogue: The Codex Ambrosianus,' *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 86 (1982): 253–276, here 269. This relationship between rusticity and literary endeavour is further indicated by the comment adjacent to l. 74 ('ita meae, quondam felix pecus, ite capell[a]e'). Petrarch gives 'libelli' as a gloss for 'capellae'.

<sup>109</sup> Martellotti, *Prose*, 300, n.1.

<sup>110</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 1; P I, ii; *Prose*, 300–2.

<sup>111</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 1; P I, ii; *Prose*, 300.

<sup>112</sup> E.g. Juvenal, *Sat.* III, 30; 41–2.

<sup>113</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 1; P I, ii; *Prose*, 300.

<sup>114</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 2; P I, ii; *Prose*, 302. It is striking that this passage appears to repeat Petrarch's account of his own experiences in the *Posteritati. Sen.* XVIII, 1.

Returning home for lunch, the *occupatus* presides over a scene filled with disgusting manifestations of excess. Munificence and luxury are combined with degradation and disorder, while wealth is displayed ostentatiously alongside privation and low standards. 'Silver plate, [wrought] with gold flies through the hall,' Petrarch wrote echoing similar descriptions in Latin literature,<sup>115</sup>

and drinking cups fashioned from hollowed-out gems. [T]he bench is clothed with silk, the wall with purple, the ground with tapestries, while a suite of unclothed servants shiver. With the line of battle having been drawn up, the signal for the fight is given by a clarion. The captains of cookery join battle with the captains of the dining hall, a huge din rises up, dishes sought out from land and sea are carried in, and wine trodden during the time of ancient consuls. Wines both Italian [*nostre*] and Greek glow red in the gold; mixed together in one cup are Gnosos and Meroe, Vesuvius and Falernus, the hills of Sorrento and of Calabria: nor is [this] enough unless Ausonian Bacchus, steeped with Hyblaeon honey or the juice of the eastern cane, and made fragrant with blackberries, has changed his nature through art. In another part [of the hall] may be seen an equal procession of a different kind: horrible beasts, unknown fish, unheard-of birds, smeared with ground spices and forgetful of their old homeland, certain [of them] testifying to their origin only with their designation and now retaining only the name of the Phasian.<sup>116</sup> Spectacular dishes for the diners that have experienced all the caprices of the cooks smoke: if a hungry man were to see with what filth and with how much meretricious wheedling [*lenocinio*] they were concocted, he would rise satisfied by the sight alone.<sup>117</sup>

After several hours devoted to this meal, the *occupatus* once again returns to his deceitful machinations. Quoting Juvenal, Petrarch points to the fact that he is impatient to return to his deceitfulness, cupidity, anger, and

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Cicero, *Pro S. Roscio*, 133–4; Horace, *Sat.* II, ii, 23–52; II, iv, 11–88; II, vi, 100–5; II, viii; Juvenal, *Sat.* V, 24–155.

<sup>116</sup> Pheasant? It is possible that Petrarch intends to suggest that pheasants come from around the River Phasis.

<sup>117</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 3; *P I*, ii, *Prose*, 306: '...volat atriis argentum auro infectum et pocula cavis gemmis expressa, scamnum serico vestitur, ostro paries, terra tapetibus, dum servorum nuda interim cohors tremit. Instructa acie datur tandem lituo signum pugne. Coquine duces aule ducibus concurrunt, ingens fragor exoritur, convehuntur terra marique conquisite epule et vina priscis calcata consulibus. Ardent rutilo in auro nostre graeque vindemie, uno in scipho Gnosos et Meroe, Vesevus Falernusque miscentur, Surrentinique colles et Calabri. Nec satis est, nisi Bacchus Ausonius, vel Hibleo melle vel Eoe suco medicatus harundinis, baccisque nigrantibus odoratus, naturam arte mutaverit. Parte alia par diversi generis pompa conspicitur: fere horribiles, pisces incogniti, volucres inaudite, pulvere precioso oblite et oblite veteris patrie, quedam voce testantes originem, nomenque iam solum de phaside retinentes. Fumant ipsis edentibus stupenda fercula et omne cocorum passa ludibrium, que siquis valde licet esuriens cernat quam fede quantoque sint coagulata lenocinio, solo spectaculo satur adscendat.'

lusts.<sup>118</sup> Unwilling to brook any restraint or waste any opportunity to further his desires, he sets to his task with a renewed energy and redoubled ingenuity. Passing some time in this way, he eventually finds that he has to venture outside to further his wicked ends, and Petrarch uses this as an opportunity to locate him firmly within an urban context. As in Horace's self-portrait in *Sat.* II, vi,<sup>119</sup> the *occupatus* is portrayed as having to force his way through streets strewn with every kind of filth, pushing his way through the crowd, sweating and panting all the way.<sup>120</sup>

Despite the vigour with which the *occupatus* involves himself in others' affairs and indulges his passions, however, Petrarch seems to follow the Epicureans (and, to a lesser extent, the Stoics) in emphasising the fact that the busy man is wracked by fear. Throughout his activities and in the midst of his indulgences, he has been tormented by concerns, both because he fears treachery or loss,<sup>121</sup> and because he is on occasions pricked by the last vestiges of his conscience.<sup>122</sup> Though he conducts his life with fervour, it brings him no pleasure, and when he retires at night, he is torn by conflicting emotions.<sup>123</sup> He lies in bed, Petrarch claims, tormented by the memories of the day. Although he will certainly wake with a familiar eagerness to return to his wicked ways, the darkness brings remembrance of 'clients deceived, the poor oppressed, farmers pushed from their land, deflowered virgins, betrayed wards, despoiled widows, the innocent harried and killed,' and, thinking of the Furies punishing him, he frequently cries out in horror from his sleep.<sup>124</sup>

Representing the very opposite of the *occupatus*, Petrarch's *solitarius* appears to manifest the key features of Stoic and Epicurean conceptions of the *vita contemplativa*. As in the works of his classical antecedents, the solitary man, living away from the city and cut off from the affairs of

<sup>118</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 5; P I, ii; *Prose*, 312, quoting Juvenal, *Sat.* XIV, 176–7.

<sup>119</sup> Horace, *Sat.* II, vi, 27–31.

<sup>120</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 6; P I, ii; *Prose*, 314. Cf. *Invective contra medicum*, II, 99; Marsh, 80.

<sup>121</sup> E.g. *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 3; P I, ii; *Prose*, 306.

<sup>122</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 2; P I, ii; *Prose*, 302, referring to Cicero, *Phil.* III, ix, 22; *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 4; P I, ii; *Prose*, 310.

<sup>123</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 8; P I, ii; *Prose*, 316.

<sup>124</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 8; P I, ii; *Prose*, 316: 'Tum diurna negotia, deceptos clientes, oppressos pauperes, pulsos finibus agricolas, stupratos virgines, circumscriptos pupillos, spoliatas viduas, afflictos necatosque innoxios, cumque his omnibus ultrices scelerum Furias videt; sepe itaque dormiens exclamat, sepe conqueritur, et sepe metu subito somnus abruptitur.'

men like St. Jerome,<sup>125</sup> St. Benedict,<sup>126</sup> and Pope Celestine V,<sup>127</sup> experiences peace, enjoys moderation, offers regular prayers, and occupies himself with study. Unlike the *occupatus*, Petrarch writes that the *solitarius*

is filled with virtuous joy, filled with sacred hope, full of pious love—not like Nisus' [love] for Eurialus, but like Peter's [love] for Christ—filled with a sound conscience, a sense of security among men, a fear of God, free from noxious foods and useless cares, alone, quiet, tranquil, like an angel, beloved of God, causing fear to no-one, loved by all...<sup>128</sup>

Living without concern for *res aliena*, he 'envies no-one, [and] hates no-one.' A self-contained figure like a Stoic or Epicurean sage, he is, indeed,

content with his own lot and inaccessible to the injuries of fortune, he fears nothing, desires nothing; he knows that poison has not been sprinkled over his vessels, he knows that a little suffices for a man's life, and that the true and greatest wealth is to wish for nothing, the greatest power to fear nothing; he lives a happy and peaceful life, tranquil nights, leisurely days and secure meals; he wanders freely, he sits down without fear, he neither plots anything nor fears any plots against him; he knows that he is loved for himself and not for his possessions. He knows that his death is of use to no-one, that his life is not harmful to anyone, and judges it to be of great interest not how long he lives, but how well he lives. Nor does he bother much about where or when he will die, but esteems only the manner of his death. On one thing only is he intent with his greatest desire: that he will conclude with a beautiful ending the tale of a good life.<sup>129</sup>

This peace is intimately bound up with the manner in which the solitary man conducts his day. Whereas the *occupatus* devotes hours to involving himself in others' affairs, deceiving everyone he meets as he rushes

<sup>125</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 6; P II, v; *Prose*, 440, quoting Jerome, *Ep.* XXII.

<sup>126</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 9; P II, vi; *Prose*, 450.

<sup>127</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 18; P II, viii; *Prose*, 474, referring to Dante, *Inf.* III, 60.

<sup>128</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 8; P I, ii; *Prose*, 316: 'Iste [*solitarius*] autem plenus honesto gaudio, plenus sancta spe, plenus amore pio, non Euriali ut Nisus, sed ut Petrus Cristi, plenus conscientie integritate, securitate hominum, Dei metu, nocituri cibi et inutilium vacuus curarum, solus, tacitus, tranquillus, angelo simillimus, Deo carus, formidabilis nemini, cunctis amabilis...' Referring to Virgil, *Aen.* IX, 176ff.

<sup>129</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 3; P I, ii; *Prose*, 308–19: 'Nulli penitus invidet, nullum odit; sorte contentus sua et fortune iniuriis inaccessus, nichil metuit, nichil cupit; scit non spargi venena fictilibus, scit vite hominum pauca sufficere, et summas verasque divitias nil optare, summum imperium nil timere; letum agit atque tranquillum evum, placidas noctes, otiosos dies et secura convivia; it liber, sedet intrepidus, nullas struit aut cavet insidias, scit se amari et non sua. Scit mortem suam nulli utilem, nulli damnosam vitam, neque multum interesse arbitratur quam diu, sed quam bene vivat, nec ubi aut quando moriatur magni exstimat, sed qualiter; in id unum summo studio intentus, ut bene actam vite fabulam pulcro fine concludat.'

around the city, the *solitarius* lives for the glory of God and for edifying study.<sup>130</sup> Spent in the company of the birds beside a murmuring stream, he follows the example of St. Bernard<sup>131</sup> in filling his days with humble prayers.<sup>132</sup> In keeping with his prayer for continence, his meals are of modest fare served in a simple setting and, sitting at a table of innocence, his conscience is a paradise.<sup>133</sup>

#### 4. *Quid Tamen Ego Certius Novi, Qualis Solitariae Vite Status Interior Sit?*

Although Petrarch described the contrast between the *occupatus* and the *solitarius*, and between *rus* and *urbs* using language and imagery which seem to have been drawn from his sources for Stoic and Epicurean thought, it would not be valid to infer conceptual dependence from literary similarity. The fact that Petrarch included many of the characteristic features of a Stoic or Epicurean *vita contemplativa* alongside motifs drawn from Latin bucolic verse in the *De vita solitaria* conceals underlying conceptual differences and a divergence from the foundations of Stoic and Epicurean thought.

Petrarch's relationship with his sources was far from slavish, and he was not averse to castigating classical authors for their views on solitude in the *De vita solitaria*. In keeping with his general understanding of imitation, Petrarch agreed with Quintilian that—with particular respect to classical works on solitude—emulation should not be confused with uncritical reproduction, and contended that it is easier to surpass an author than merely to replicate his views.<sup>134</sup> Although he admired Cicero,<sup>135</sup> Virgil, Horace<sup>136</sup> and Seneca,<sup>137</sup> Petrarch did not aver from finding fault with their writings and challenging their conceptions of solitude. In a discussion of whether all men are suited to a life of solitude, Petrarch noted that Seneca had advised Lucilius to avoid not merely the many, or the

<sup>130</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 1; P I, ii; *Prose*, 302.

<sup>131</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 14; P II, vii; *Prose*, 462.

<sup>132</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 2; P I, ii; *Prose*, 304.

<sup>133</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 4; P I, ii; *Prose*, 310.

<sup>134</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 2; P I, vii; *Prose*, 386, quoting Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.* X, 2, 9–10.

<sup>135</sup> See, for example, *Fam.* XII, 8; *De vita solitaria*, Z II, viii, 2; P II, xii; *Prose*, 534–8.

<sup>136</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, vii, 2; P II, xii; *Prose*, 528–32.

<sup>137</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 2; P I, vii; *Prose*, 386.



few, but even individuals.<sup>138</sup> While he agreed that the multitude should be avoided, however, Petrarch disagreed with the suggestion that solitude should entail isolation.<sup>139</sup> Indeed, reviewing Seneca's life in the second book, Petrarch openly admitted that he disliked Seneca's view of solitude.<sup>140</sup> Quintilian, too, was criticised, although in more deferential terms. For Quintilian, the groves and woods of the countryside were unsuited to literary endeavour, although retirement itself was to be desired by all writers.<sup>141</sup> Despite implicitly accepting that such a view was in tension with his own, Petrarch denied that their opinions were completely at variance and, by allowing Quintilian to retain some claim to authority in this regard, clung to his own enthusiasm for the countryside.<sup>142</sup>

This willingness to criticise classical authors reflects a deeper divergence from the moral philosophy on which Stoic and Epicurean notions of the *vita contemplativa* were based and Petrarch appears to have integrated images and motifs appropriated from classical literature into a quite different conceptual framework. Whereas both the Epicureans and the Stoics based their conception of the *vita contemplativa* on the assumption that specific activities and locations could communicate moral qualities, Petrarch's understanding of solitude does not involve so strong an emphasis on action or physicality. Particularly with respect to countryside imagery in the *Canzoniere* and the further elaboration of solitude in the *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch's attitude towards landscape and *occupationes* was far more fluid than in the works of his classical antecedents. Implicitly rejecting the division between a *vita activa* and a *vita contemplativa* as the basis for his treatment of solitude, Petrarch placed greater stress on the internal condition of the agent, and as such positioned *solitudo* in close relation to *otium*, discussed in the previous chapter.

Petrarch's divergence from the conceptual basis of Stoic and Epicurean notions of the *vita contemplativa* is first suggested by the development of the *rus-urbs* motif in the *Canzoniere*. Repeating some of the imagery familiar to classical treatments of the theme, Petrarch railed against the vice of the city and yearned for the countryside, occasionally exploiting

<sup>138</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 3; P I, vii; *Prose*, 370–2, quoting Seneca, *Ep.*, x, 1.

<sup>139</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 3; P I, vii; *Prose*, 372.

<sup>140</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, viii, 1; P II, xiii; *Prose*, 534, referring to Seneca, *Ep.* x, 1.

<sup>141</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 1; P I, vii; *Prose*, 362, quoting Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.* X, iii, 22–5.

<sup>142</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 1; P I, vii; *Prose*, 364.

opportunities to develop parallels with the eschatological language of *Revelations*. Describing Avignon as 'Babilonia', he presented it as the city 'whence all good has flown, the dwelling of sorrow, the mother of errors,'<sup>143</sup> and decried its inhabitants as 'those deaf and blear-eyed minds that have lost the path to Heaven.'<sup>144</sup> Seeing that the people had given themselves over to every form of iniquity, Petrarch could not help but express his disgust.<sup>145</sup> Juxtaposing city and countryside, he called on the riverbanks, meadows, and woods in *Canz.* 259 to testify that he had sought out the solitary life in order to avoid those ignorant of virtue.<sup>146</sup> Expressing the same sentiment in a metrical epistle written to Giacomo Colonna in 1338, he voiced his hatred of the querulous mob that thronged the city and made plain his desire to return to the countryside, where he could enjoy the company of good friends.<sup>147</sup>

Despite its apparent similarities with Stoic and Epicurean thought, however, Petrarch's development of the *rus-urbs* motif undermines the comparison. In contrast to both the Stoic and the Epicureans, Petrarch indicates that physical separation from the city and from *occupationes* contributed little to the attainment of peace. As I have argued elsewhere, by representing Avignon as 'Babilonia', Petrarch presented it not as a literal city of vice, in which physicality and moral identity could be equated, but as an emblem for worldly desire and a mirror in which he could examine his own conscience.<sup>148</sup> The same is true of the image of the countryside. Despite finding a certain delight in the beauty of the countryside, Petrarch experienced nothing more than a change of scenery while he persisted in his love for Laura. In Vaucluse, he was free from the *vulgus* and from the sways of Fortune,<sup>149</sup> but—with Love still leading him on<sup>150</sup>—he was tormented by the indifference of his beloved and filled with sorrow.<sup>151</sup> Wandering alone 'per campagne et per colli', he was consumed by care and

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<sup>143</sup> *Canz.* 114, ll. 1–3: '...l'empia Babilonia ond' è fuggita  
ogni vergogna, ond' ogni bene è forì,  
albergo di dolor, madre d'errori'.

<sup>144</sup> *Canz.* 259, ll. 3–4: '...questi ingegni sordi et loschi  
che la strada del Cielo ànon smarrita'.

<sup>145</sup> *Canz.* 136, ll. 1–8; 137, ll. 1–5.

<sup>146</sup> *Canz.* 259, ll. 1–3.

<sup>147</sup> *Ep. Met.* I, 6, ll. 215–17. For a discussion of *Ep. Met.* I, 6 in the context of Petrarch's treatment of solitude, see Petrie, 'Petrarch *solitarius*,' 31–2.

<sup>148</sup> Lee, 'Sin City?'

<sup>149</sup> *Canz.* 114, ll. 9–11.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 5.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 12–13.

felt burdened with love and grief.<sup>152</sup> Indeed, so long as he was plagued by his affection, the landscape itself manifested his sorrow. Although he was able to think on higher things<sup>153</sup> in the comfort of the rosy wood,<sup>154</sup> the persistence of his love made him see Laura everywhere and enhanced his distress.<sup>155</sup> The appropriation of Ovidian metamorphosis throughout the *Canzoniere* serves to project both Laura and his love onto the landscape. A full survey is unnecessary, but it may be noted by way of illustration that Petrarch himself figures, like Acteon, as a stag fleeing the hounds,<sup>156</sup> while Laura, even after her death, appears 'in the clear water and on the green grass and in the trunk of a beech tree and in a white cloud.'<sup>157</sup> His interior

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<sup>152</sup> *Canz.* 125, ll. 1–13: 'Se 'l pensier che mi strugge  
come' è pungente et saldo  
così vestisse d'un color conforme,  
forse tal m'arde et fugga  
ch' avria parte del caldo  
et desteriasi Amor là dov' or dorme;  
men solitarie l'orme  
foran de' miei piè' lassi  
per compagne et per colli,  
me gli occhi ad ogn'or molli,  
ardendo lei che come un ghiaccio stassi  
et non lascia in me dramma  
che non sia foco et fiamma.'

M. A. M. Flansburg, 'Landscape Imagery in Petrarch's "Canzoniere": Development and Characterization of the Imagery and an Illustration in the Virgil Frontispiece by Simone Martini' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1986), 115: 'Petrarch converted his affection for the woodlands and the beech and laurel groves of the valley into the seductive and dangerous Virgilian groves of love [cf. *Aen.* VI, 132–148]. His amorous woods do not copy the claustrophobic darkness or golden boughs of the Underworld; however, Petrarch distorted his personal affection for Vacluse and his love for nature. His woods are deceptively green and shady and the projected object in a most beautiful flower or tree. As in Virgil, danger of thorns and snares and other obstacles mark the course to his object, but he is compelled to advance regardless of foreknowledge of his peril. Petrarch's obstacles are usually more specific metaphors than the darkness and terrain of Hades; they are barbs and vines that encroach insidiously to entangle and pain him.' This is an extremely interesting suggestion, but there seems to be some question as to the extent to which a Virgilian parallel can be sustained by the available material. If a comparison is to be made, it must be confined to the snares and traps that the wood contains. It does not seem possible to see how Petrarch could have adapted Virgil's description of Aeneas' escape from the wood in a satisfactory manner.

<sup>153</sup> *Ep.Met.* I, 6, l. 226.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 211–14.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 144–51.

<sup>156</sup> *Canz.* 23, ll. 156–60.

<sup>157</sup> *Canz.* 129, ll. 40–3: I l'ò più volte (or chi fia che mi 'l creda?)  
ne l'acqua chiara et sopra l'erba verde  
veduto viva, et nel troncon d'un faggio  
e 'n bianca nube.

condition not only prolonged his sense of misery, but even shaped his apprehension of his surroundings. Even if—at most—Petrarch's physical dislocation from the city and separation from *occupationes* in the quiet of the countryside may be seen as helping to create the potential for the attainment of peace, the positive *solitudo* to which he was so attached evidently consisted not in the landscape, but in his interior condition.

The priority which Petrarch accords to an inner moral condition, and the degree to which it should be separated from location in understanding solitude is developed more fully in the *De vita solitaria*. Digressing from a biographical sketch of St. Francis of Assisi, Petrarch argues that there are three types of solitude: one of place (*solitudo loci*), one of time (*solitudo temporis*) and one of mind (*solitudo animi*).<sup>158</sup> Since the *solitudo temporis* is that which all people experience at night—'when there is solitude and silence even at the rostra'—Petrarch essentially distinguishes only between the *solitudo loci* and the *solitudo animi*.

This is in itself a significant break from Stoic and Epicurean notions of the *vita contemplativa*. For both the Stoics and the Epicureans, there was no need to speak of a *solitudo animi* separate from a *solitudo loci*: the two were in every sense identical. For Petrarch, however, it is possible for a man to possess one and not the other, and his discussion of this point reveals his distance from these two classical traditions of thought.

Having described their respective days, Petrarch reiterated that he had placed before Philippe de Cabassoles a view of the man of action (*occupatus*) and of the man of leisure (*otiosus*).<sup>159</sup> Despite the resonance this appears to have with the classical distinction between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, however, Petrarch almost immediately subverts it. It is, he admits, possible for some *occupati* to live virtuously in the world.<sup>160</sup> Although this is rare, it is nevertheless exceptionally praiseworthy and Petrarch is led to reflect further. Engaging directly with Seneca, he juxtaposed selective quotations to illustrate the difficulty of agreeing entirely with the philosopher's view of *occupationes* and the *vita contemplativa*. Misrepresenting the sense of *Ep.* lv, Petrarch initially claims that Seneca

<sup>158</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 12; P II, vi; *Prose*, 454: 'Triplex, nempe, si rite complector, solitudo est: loci scilicet, de qua maxime michi nunc sermo susceptus est; temporis, qualis est noctium, quando etiam in rostris solitudo silentiumque est: animi, qualis est eorum qui vi profundissime contemplationis abstracti luce media et frequenti foro quid illic geratur nesciunt, qui quotiens et ubicunque voluerint soli sunt.'

<sup>159</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 1; P I, iii; *Prose*, 318.

<sup>160</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii; *Prose*, 322.

had argued that places contribute nothing to tranquillity,<sup>161</sup> and then suggests—quite rightly, under the circumstances—that this is contradicted by another passage in which Seneca indicated the need to flee from the very sight of the Forum.<sup>162</sup> Satisfied that he has ‘proved’ Seneca’s inconsistency, Petrarch then further misrepresents his source material by ‘agreeing’ that ‘it is the mind which must make everything agreeable to itself’ and by denying that there is much to be found in places.<sup>163</sup> While he briefly accepts that a composed mind makes allowances for its surroundings,<sup>164</sup> Petrarch challenges the view that *occupationes* and location preclude virtue and accords primacy to the condition of the mind.

That the mind may allow a man to be virtuous despite being in the city is illustrated by a frank confession a little earlier in the text. Unable to stay in Vaucluse all the time, Petrarch was sometimes obliged to live in the city. While there, however, he was free from the fears of which Stoic and Epicurean writers were so conscious. Shutting off his senses, he was able to create a solitude within himself and could walk the streets untouched

<sup>161</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii; *Prose*, 324, quoting Seneca, *Ep.* lv, 8.

<sup>162</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii; *Prose*, 324, quoting Seneca, *Ep.* li, 4 and *Ep.* xxviii, 6. It is worth noting that Zeitlin (127) almost inverts the meaning of this passage by according ‘nam ut loca . . . parum salubria’ to Petrarch and not to Seneca, *Ep.* xxviii, 6.

<sup>163</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii; *Prose*, 324: ‘Est in locis aliquid, pace Senecam dixerim, est multum, sed non totum, fateor. Illud quidem, ut sibi videtur, in animo est. Nam sic ait: “Animus est, qui sibi commendat omnia.”’ quoting Seneca, *Ep.* lv, 8. This gnomic quotation is nothing short of a total misrepresentation or misunderstanding of *Ep.* lv. In this letter, Seneca drew attention to Servilius Vatia, a wealthy Roman aristocrat who completely isolated himself at his country villa. Although men who had been ruined by friendship or enmity in public life praised Vatia for his good sense, Seneca criticised him for having known how to hide, but not how to live (*Ep.* lv, 3–4) and perhaps deliberately intended to present him as having lived in accordance with some poorly-understood form of Epicureanism. It was not vice or dissolution which attracted Seneca’s ire, but rather the fact that Vatia had shut himself away from all human company and devoted himself to food, sleep and lust out of fear. (*Ep.* lv, 5) Seneca’s criticism rests not on Vatia’s practices *per se*, but on the error of believing that the person who lives for no-one lives only for himself. As a result, the letter becomes a demonstration of the importance of friendship to solitude. If Lucilius sustains his friendships in his mind, Seneca argues that there is no need for him to fear following Vatia’s example at his country villa. It is in the sense of the remembrance of friends that Seneca used the phrase ‘animus est, qui sibi commendat omnia’, and not in the sense suggested by Petrarch.

<sup>164</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 3; P I, iii; *Prose*, 324: ‘Itaque quod de locis dixi, de animo repetam: esse in illo aliquid, multum esse, totum minime, sed in eo tantum, qui oportunitatem locis tribuit, animo rationem.’ In his edition of the text, Martellotti capitalises ‘eo’, but it seems difficult to agree with this decision, and more plausible to suggest that ‘eo’ agrees with ‘animus’.

by the turpitude of the vulgar mob.<sup>165</sup> The same could be said of St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis experienced not merely the solitude of the night and the solitude of place, but also possessed the solitude of mind in abundance. Although he was at home in the wilderness, Petrarch argues, he was equally serene in the city. His body might have been jostled by the mob, but, Petrarch contends, he was nevertheless granted great serenity because his mind was fixed on heavenly things.<sup>166</sup>

The greater importance of the *solitudo animi* compared to the *solitudo loci* is further confirmed a little later in the text at Z I, iv, 6. Following a passage discussing Plotinus' hierarchy of virtues<sup>167</sup>—which Zeitlin highlighted as clear proof of his 'remoteness from mystic thought' and enthusiasm for a classical *vita contemplativa*<sup>168</sup>—Petrarch asks

What . . . do I know more certainly than the inner nature of the solitary life? Caves, hills and groves are accessible to all equally; no-one shuts out those entering, no-one drives away those going in, there is no doorkeeper, no guard for [this] unpopulated place. But of what value to me is the entrance to places alone, what of the fact [that] winding streams carry me along, what help are the lustrous woods, what use are the fixed mountains, if wherever I go, my mind follows, to the same extent in the woods as in the towns? It is that [i.e. the mind] which before all else must be put aside; that, I say, that must be left behind at home, and it must be humbly begged of the Lord that he make a pure heart within me, and to renew an upright spirit in this heart. Only then will I penetrate the hidden life of solitude.<sup>169</sup>

Although this passage is—like so many others—suffused with an enthusiasm for the beauty of the countryside, Petrarch nevertheless carefully distinguishes between the *solitudo loci* and the *solitudo animi*. While all men may retreat to the woodland and enjoy the *ambiti amnes* and *lustrate silve*, such surroundings are of no value so long as the mind carries its concerns with it, as Petrarch's poetic persona in the *Canzoniere* so readily

<sup>165</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 3; *P I*, iv; *Prose*, 336.

<sup>166</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 12; *P II*, vi; *Prose*, 454–6.

<sup>167</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 5; *P I*, iv; *Prose*, 340–2, referring to Macrobius, *In Somn. Scip.* I, viii, 5–11.

<sup>168</sup> Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 59.

<sup>169</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 6; *P I*, v; *Prose*, 344: 'Quid tamen ego certius novi, qualis solitarie vite status interior sit? Antra, colles et nemora eque omnibus patent; nemo arcet intrantes, nemo pellit ingressos, deserti nullus est ianitor, nullus custos. Sed quid locorum solus introitus, quid ambitu vehunt amnes, quid lustrate iuvant silve, quid insessi prosunt montes, si quocunque iero, animus me meus insequitur, talis in silvis qualis erat in urbibus? Ille ante omnia deponendus, ille, inquam, ille domi relinquendus erat, suppliciterque poscendum a domino ut cor in me crearet mundum, et spiritum rectum his in visceribus innovaret. Tum demum vite solitarie abdita penetrassem.'

illustrates. It is only with a pure heart and an upright spirit that a man may penetrate to the 'inner nature of the solitary life', the 'hidden life of solitude'. It is his interior nature that determines the agent's relationship with his environment, and it is this 'hidden life of solitude'—identical to the *solitudo animi*—which constitutes the one *true* solitude.

##### 5. *Understanding the Solitudo Animi: the Problem of Res Aliena*

Petrarch's description of the 'hidden life of solitude' in terms of the *solitudo animi* clearly marks him out as having diverged from the structures of Stoic and Epicurean thought. Abandoning the emphasis on the separation of a contemplative life from an active life, he appears to participate in a classical tradition only at the level of imagery. Despite this, however, it might nevertheless be argued that the *solitudo animi* still displays features characteristic of a Stoic or Epicurean *vita contemplativa* and this is a line of argument which, although couched in slightly different terms, is central to both Zeitlin and Tripet's interpretation of the *De via solitaria*.<sup>170</sup>

For both Zeitlin and Tripet, Petrarch's understanding of the true nature of solitude was heavily dependent on the Stoic/Epicurean critique of involvement in *res aliena*, and on their concomitant emphasis on subjective self-awareness. As we have seen, the Epicurean rejection of the *vita activa* was based on the belief that involvement in the affairs of others would not only leave a person vulnerable to anxiety, but would also distract him from the things which would certainly bring him joy. Where a man made himself dependent on another's will, he forsook his own identity, and made himself subject to the fickleness of fate and to worry. This line of argument was developed further by the Stoics, and the stress on subjective ends is repeated in sources known to Petrarch. Writing about the god in all men, Seneca attempted to demonstrate that 'no man should glory in anything except in that which is his own.'<sup>171</sup> Where a man made himself subject to the will of another, even that of a god, he became forgetful of his own true self and of the ends for which he was suited. It was better, Seneca contended, for a person to live according to his own nature, and to pursue the ends for which he was intended by birth.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>170</sup> Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 60–1; Tripet, *Pétrarque ou la connaissance de soi*, 40–5.

<sup>171</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* xli, 7.

<sup>172</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* xli, 7–8.



Although Petrarch did not share their scepticism for the divine, there is some evidence to suggest that he attempted to emulate the Stoic and Epicurean treatment of subjectivism. In keeping with his frequent description of the *occupatus* as one who ‘se se atque alios involvat,’<sup>173</sup> the central portion of the first book of the *De vita solitaria* displays an acute consciousness of the deleterious effects of involvement in the affairs of others and decries the attendant loss of selfhood in a manner which seems to evoke the two schools of classical philosophy. As in both Stoic and Epicurean thought, Petrarch was troubled by the fact that such people subject themselves to another’s mind and was aware that this would entail the substitution of another’s objectives for their own subjective ends. Explaining the vice and sorrow of most busy men, Petrarch wondered ironically whether

the condition of those who are occupied with another’s business, who are ruled by the nod of another, and who learn what they ought to do from another’s look, is happier. For these people, everything is another’s: another’s house, another’s roof, another’s sleep, another’s food and—what is most serious—another’s mind, another’s outlook; they do not cry or laugh by their own choice, but, having put aside their own, put on the disposition of another; in short, they direct themselves towards another, they think another[‘s thoughts], they live another[‘s life].<sup>174</sup>

As Tripet has argued, Petrarch seems to follow Stoic and Epicurean critiques of the *vita activa* in suggesting that a man who was involved in *res aliena* would become forgetful of his true end and would lose his moral autonomy.<sup>175</sup> Having forgotten his true nature and concerned only with another’s affairs, Petrarch suggests that the *occupatus* nevertheless only accrues sin for himself.<sup>176</sup>

The life of the solitary man is praised in similar terms. Petrarch seems to celebrate the fact that—cut off from other people’s business and having only himself for a master—the solitary man enjoyed a fullness of selfhood.

<sup>173</sup> See note 110, above.

<sup>174</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 1; P, I, iii; *Prose*, 318: ‘Nisi forte felicior est illorum conditio, qui alienis negotiis occupantur, alieni nutus arbitrio reguntur, et quid agere illos oporteat in aliena fronte condiscunt. Omnia illis aliena sunt: alienum limen, alienum textum, alienus somnus, alienus cibus, et, quod est maximum, aliena mens, aliena frons; non suo iudicio flent et rident, sed abiectis propriis alienos induunt affectus, denique alienum tractant, alienum cogitant, alieno vivunt.’ Zeitlin’s use of punctuation and translation of this passage (122) is again questionable and leads to some degree of misunderstanding.

<sup>175</sup> Tripet, *Pétrarque ou la connaissance de soi*, 47.

<sup>176</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 1; P, I, iii; *Prose*, 318–20.

Thinking back to the fear of living at another's beck and call, Petrarch rejoices that the *solitarius* is not required to attend a banquet when he does not wish to eat, is not obliged to speak when he would rather remain silent, is not held up by the pointless bustle of the city, and is not prey to the petty sniping and offences of the majority of *occupati*.<sup>177</sup> Acknowledging that men have been created so that they might find peace in Christ, Petrarch marvels at how wonderful it is to live according to one's own will, wandering in the countryside as one wishes, and belonging to oneself at all times.<sup>178</sup>

Zeitlin appears correct in affirming that while Petrarch Christianised the concept appropriately, '[t]he virtue to which the solitary erects his shrine is the self-centred virtue of the Epicureans, and time and again the Epicurean sentiment breaks through in the phrasing'.<sup>179</sup> As in Stoic and Epicurean philosophy, a sense of subjectivism is made a predicate of a truth to one's end in the same way as the loss of autonomy entailed a rejection. Following this line of argument, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that Petrarch conceived of the *solitudo animi* as a form of mental subjectivism. Simply using a new term to describe a barely Christianised version of a classical idea, it seems fair to suggest that the *solitudo animi* was an intellectual detachment from the affairs of others, a sense of psychological oneness which evokes Seneca's belief that 'no man should glory in anything except that which is his own'.<sup>180</sup>

A Stoic/Epicurean reading of Petrarch's *solitudo animi* is not unattractive. Although it may have been applied differently from the intentions of its original authors, such a 'classical' understanding of the *solitudo animi* would have allowed Petrarch the conceptual flexibility to transcend the literalism of the contrast between *rus* and *urbs*, while still remaining true to the idea of a *vita contemplativa*. It would, moreover, have fitted not only with Petrarch's willingness to observe sorrow in rustic seclusion and virtue in urban surroundings, but also with his enthusiasm for rustic beauty.

Despite its appeal, however, such a reading of the *solitudo animi* is open to some question. Although the passages considered above are remarkable for the degree to which Petrarch's treatment of *res aliena* appears to reproduce elements of the Stoic and Epicurean critiques of the *vita activa*, this interpretation omits to take full account of the broader system

<sup>177</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 9; P I, vi; *Prose*, 354; cf. *Sen.* XVII, 2.

<sup>178</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 9; P I, vi; *Prose*, 354, referring to Dante, *Par.* I, 5–6.

<sup>179</sup> Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 57.

<sup>180</sup> Tripet, *Pétrarque ou la connaissance de soi*, 41–2.

of moral philosophy which forms the context of the discussion, and overlooks the striking Augustinian parallels which are to be observed lurking beneath the surface.

Although Petrarch's contrast between the *occupatus* and the *solitarius* seems to bear many structural similarities with classical treatments of the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, it is important to note that the *topos* was not unique to Stoic and Epicurean literature. Perhaps unsurprisingly given his willingness to transpose elements of pagan thought to a Christian setting, St. Augustine himself adapted the theme to very different purposes and offered a version of the contrast which was cast principally in terms of the opposition of inward peace and the fears which spring from worldly cares. '[L]et us imagine two men,' Augustine wrote in the *De civitate Dei*,

[and] let us suppose one of these men to be poor, or at any rate of moderate means, and the other to be very wealthy. The wealthy man, however, is troubled by fears; he pines with grief; he burns with greed. He is never secure; he is always unquiet and panting from endless confrontations with his enemies. To be sure, he adds to his patrimony in immense measure by these miseries; but alongside these additions he also heaps up the most bitter cares. By contrast, the man of moderate means is self-sufficient on his small and circumscribed estate. He is beloved of his own family, and rejoices in the most sweet peace with kindred, neighbours and friends. He is devoutly religious, well disposed in mind, healthy in body, frugal in life, chaste in morals, untroubled by conscience. I do not know if anyone could be such a fool as to doubt which to prefer.<sup>181</sup>

Although there are echoes of Juvenal and Horace (to name only two), Augustine's concern is to show that the man who is preoccupied with temporal wealth is suffused with grief and torment, while the man who is devoted to God and satisfied with very little possesses an inward peace. While it is true that Petrarch may not have had this passage in mind (and may even have balked at aspects of the saint's development of the subject later in the same text), the fact that Augustine offered an adaptation of the classical contrast between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* in terms of orientation should at least give us pause for further reflection. As will be apparent, Petrarch does indeed seem to have drawn inspiration for the *occupatus* and the *solitarius* primarily from St. Augustine, but looked to

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<sup>181</sup> Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, IV, 3; trans. Dyson, 146–7. Also note a similar treatment of this theme at Augustine, *Conf.* VI, vi.

the saint's earlier works for his understanding of the concentration on *res aliena* which this passage from the *De civitate Dei* displays.

As we have already observed, Petrarch explained the condition of the *occupatus* as the product of his failure to understand the true aim of man. 'Truly,' Petrarch wrote,

we who are accustomed to show the correct path to others [are] the blind led by the blind, are carried off along precipitous ways, and revolve around another's example, unaware of what we might desire; for—so that I may pursue my undertaking—an ignorance of our end (*finis*) creates all this evil, whether our own, or more particularly of all people. Imprudent men do not know what they should do; and so whatever they do turns to nausea as soon as they have begun.<sup>182</sup>

The end of which 'inconsulti homines' are ignorant is identified as lying with Christ. In the very first lines of the *De vita solitaria*<sup>183</sup> and again at Z I, iv, 9, Petrarch affirmed that all men had been created by Christ 'to that end that we might find peace in [Him].'<sup>184</sup> Notwithstanding certain structural similarities with classical thought, Petrarch's elaboration of this theme contains no trace of Stoicism or Epicureanism, and the echoes of Augustine's *Confessiones* in the identification of the true end of man at Z I, iv, 9 already hints at the source of inspiration for his understanding of the *solitudo animi*.<sup>185</sup>

The condition of the unhappy *occupatus* is described variously as a terrible mental confusion,<sup>186</sup> and as a contagion of the mind.<sup>187</sup> Following St. Augustine's argument in the *De vera religione*, Petrarch makes it clear that this confusion is centred upon a failure to recognise the foolishness of seeking contentment in the worldly. Pursuing pleasure as much in old age as in his youth,<sup>188</sup> the *occupatus* lives as if he had been born for his

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<sup>182</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 4; *P I*, viii; *Prose*, 394: 'Nempe qui aliis iter rectum ostendere solebamur... cecis cecis ducibus, per abrupta rapimur alienoque circumvolvitur exemplo, quid velimus nescii; nam, ut ceptum exequar, totum hoc malum, seu nostrum proprium, seu potius omnium gentium commune, ignoratio finis facit. Nesciunt inconsulti homines quid agant; ideo quicquid agunt, mox ut ceperint, vergit in nauseam...' Referring to *Matt.* 15:14.

<sup>183</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, i, 1; *P I*, I; *Prose*, 296.

<sup>184</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 9; *P I*, vi; *Prose*, 354: '... quamquam, bone Iesu, ad hunc finem creati abs te ut in te requiescamus, ad hoc nati et sine hoc inutiliter atque infelicitate nati sumus...' Referring to Dante, *Par.* I, 5–6.

<sup>185</sup> Augustine, *Conf.* I, i.

<sup>186</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 1; *P I*, viii; *Prose*, 380.

<sup>187</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 4; *P I*, iii; *Prose*, 328.

<sup>188</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 2; *P I*, viii; *Prose*, 382.

belly and gives himself up to the flesh.<sup>189</sup> So enamoured, indeed, were such people of their enthusiasms that at disputations they would proudly ask what would be done if sleep, sex, food, and drink were taken away from them, and would even query the value of a life without such enjoyments.<sup>190</sup> For all his abandon and apparent pride, however, the *occupatus* is inevitably unsatisfied, troubled, tired, and worried: despite his public satisfaction, he admits to himself that he does not know where to turn.<sup>191</sup> This combination of wanton worldliness and dissatisfaction is no surprise to Petrarch, who follows St. Augustine in observing a paradox at the heart of such a lifestyle. In committing himself to bodily pleasures, the *occupatus* enters a vicious circle: hunger, thirst, and carnal desires may temporarily be relieved, but cannot ever fully be satisfied, since the urge will return as long as he lives. The busy man fails to recognise that contentment can be found only by relinquishing such desires, not by vainly pursuing and unattainable satiety. “Those people for whom the health of the body is vile,” Petrarch writes, quoting the *De vera religione* directly

“would prefer to eat than to be satisfied, and would rather enjoy their passions than to suffer no such excitement; there may even be found those who would rather sleep than not sleep; [but] at the same time, the object of all this pleasure is not to hunger and thirst, and not to desire congress, and not for fatigue to come to the body.” Not long after this, [Augustine] writes: “Those who wish to thirst, to hunger, to burn with lust, and to grow tired, so that they may freely eat, drink, copulate, and sleep” . . . he does not say: they love misery and sorrow—no-one is so averse to health that they love the name of sorrow and misery—, but “they love,” he says, “indigence, which is the beginning of the greatest sorrows.” It is clear that, just as the effect is in the cause, so the love of the effect is contained in the love of the cause; thus [Augustine] concludes terribly: “In them shall be perfected that which they love, so that lamentation and the grinding of teeth shall fall unto them.” You see that he deduces the effect from the cause: since they love indigence, they shall find misery. . . . Hence the hatred of life, hence the root of weariness, hence that inquietude of mind, than which a mortal man may suffer nothing worse while he lives.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>189</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 1; P I, viii; *Prose*, 382.

<sup>190</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 1; P I, viii; *Prose*, 382.

<sup>191</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 1; P I, viii; *Prose*, 380, quoting Terence, *Eunuchus*, 73.

<sup>192</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 2; P I, viii; *Prose*, 384: ‘De his in libro *De vera religione* Augustinus: “Quibus” inquit “vilis est corporis salus, malunt vesci quam satiari, et malunt frui genitalibus quam nullam talem commotionem pati; inveniuntur etiam qui malint dormire quam non dormire; cum omnis illius voluptatis finis sit non esurire ac sitire, et non desiderare concubitum, et non esse fatigato corpore.” Nec longe post: “Qui sitire” inquit “et esurire volunt et in libidinem ardescere et defatigari, ut libenter edant et bibant et concumbant et

Vainly pursuing his desires, and experiencing an inevitable dissatisfaction, the *occupatus* fails to recognise the transience of this life, and omits to realise that it is simply a lodging and not a home.<sup>193</sup> In loving only fleeting things, he does not appreciate the implications of his own mortality and fails to understand that he has been promised an immortal life in the company of God after death in which all longings and wants are satisfied, a fact well known to the *solitarius*.<sup>194</sup>

In this life, Petrarch contends, real happiness can only be had in the apprehension of the truth of a man's nature—the truth of his mortality and of the perfection of the immortal life which has been promised to his soul. Indeed, Petrarch asserts that if a person were to see into the heart of those orators whom the crowds admire, he would recognise that temporal happiness consists in the inward possession of the truth, and not in any of the deeds or things to which *occupati* commonly aspire.<sup>195</sup> Observing the overlap between Cicero's philosophy and Augustine's theology, Petrarch suggests that this truth—latent in all people in the sense that Christ is present within everyone—can only be apprehended with the suppression of the senses and the application of reason.<sup>196</sup> Directly following St. Augustine's *De vera religione*, Petrarch once more clarified that the *occupatus*' 'contagion of mind' is an 'illness' only insofar as he improperly attached himself to phantasms accessible to the senses rather than to the truth apprehensible through reason.<sup>197</sup>

Although Petrarch describes his rustic sorrow in very different terms in the *Canzoniere*, his understanding of the cause of his personal sense of dissatisfaction and inquietude displays an exact parallelism with his explanation for the unhappiness and discontentment of the *occupatus* in the *De vita solitaria*. Despite emulating the imagery and style of Ovid's

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dormiant" . . . non dixit: amant miseriam et dolorem—nemo est enim tam aversus a salute ut doloris et miserie nomen amet—, sed "amant" inquit "indigentiam, que est initium summorum dolorum." Constat autem, sicut effectus in causis, sic in amore causarum amorem effectuum contineri; itaque concludens terribiliter: "perficietur ergo" inquit "in eis quod amant, ut eis ibi sit ploratus et stridor dentium." Vides ut ex causa effectum elicit: quia amarunt indigentiam, miseriam consequentur. . . . Hinc vite odium, hinc tedii radix, hinc illa inquietudo animi, qua nil peius patitur mortalis homo dum vivit.' Quoting Augustine, *De vera religione*, liii, 102; liv, 104.

<sup>193</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 9; P I, vi; *Prose*, 356.

<sup>194</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 7, P I, v; *Prose*, 346–8, referring to Ps. 54:16; cf. Augustine, *De vera religione*, liii, 103.

<sup>195</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 3; P I, iii; *Prose*, 326, quoting Cicero, *Tusc.* I, xvi, 37–8.

<sup>196</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 8; P I, v; *Prose*, 352; Z I, vi, 6; P I, ix; *Prose*, 400; Z I, v, 5; P I, vii; *Prose*, 378.

<sup>197</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 2; P I, viii; *Prose*, 382–4; cf. Augustine, *De vera religione*, liv, 104.

*Metamorphoses*<sup>198</sup> and Virgil's bucolic verse, Petrarch subsumes the treatment of his unrequited love into an identifiably Augustinian meta-theme.<sup>199</sup> Indeed, as Sara Sturm-Maddox has put it, 'Petrarch's representations of amorous psychology... are imprinted with Augustinian formulations,'<sup>200</sup> and there is a strong sense that Petrarch not only recognised, but also advertised St. Augustine's assertion of the opposition of worldly desires and the apprehension of the soul's true end through the use of reason.<sup>201</sup>

Petrarch's appropriation of Augustinian moral theology in explaining his sorrow in the *Canzoniere* is most apparent in *Canz.* 264, written during his third period of residence at Vaucluse (late 1345–20 November 1347).<sup>202</sup> This poem, which takes the form of an imagined dialogue between Petrarch and an inner voice,<sup>203</sup> is inspired by a consciousness of the proximity of death<sup>204</sup> and concentrates on the foolishness of worldly love. Speaking of his love for Laura, the inner voice reminds Petrarch that he has been 'tired and disgusted by the false, fleeting sweetness which the treacherous world gives' and asks him why he places his hopes in temporal affections.<sup>205</sup> The continuation of such desires is not merely likely

<sup>198</sup> On Petrarch's use of Ovidian motifs, see, for example de Nollac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, 1:176–80; P. Blanc, 'La poétique de la métamorphose chez Pétrarque,' in *Poétiques de la Métamorphose*, ed. G. Demerson (Saint-Etienne, 1981), 37–51; D. Dutschke, *Francesco Petrarca: Canzone XXIII from First to Final Version* (Ravenna, 1977), 78–221; Sturm Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses*, 9–38; P. Hainsworth, *Petrarch the Poet. An Introduction to the Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (London and New York, 1988), 85–6, 134, 138–40, 187–8, 210. For Petrarch's knowledge of the medieval commentary tradition, see Calcaterra, *Nella selva del Petrarca*, 38–40. Also of interest is the relationship between Laura and Daphne in the *Canzoniere*, for which see, for example, Bernardo, *Petrarch, Laura and the "Triumphs"*, 27; M. Cottino-Jones, 'The Myth of Apollo and Daphne in Petrarch's *Canzoniere*: The Dynamics and Literary Function of Transformation,' in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later*, ed. Scaglione, 152–76; P. R. J. Hainsworth, 'The Myth of Daphne in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*,' *Italian Studies* 34 (1979): 28–44; U. Dotti, 'Il mito dafneo,' *Convivium* 32 (1969): 9–23.

<sup>199</sup> On the relationship between Ovidian (and stilnovist) themes and Augustinianism in the *Canzoniere*, see, for example, Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses*, 97f; D. Diani, 'Pétrarque: *Canzoniere* 132,' *Revue des Etudes Italiennes* 18 (1973): 111–67.

<sup>200</sup> Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses*, 104.

<sup>201</sup> Durling, 'Introduction' to *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, trans. and ed. Durling, 20–21.

<sup>202</sup> For the dating of this verse see Wilkins, *The Making of the "Canzoniere"*, 347–60.

<sup>203</sup> *Canz.* 264, l. 19.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 5.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 27–30: "Se già è gran tempo fastidita et lassa  
se' di quel falso dolce fuggitivo  
che 'l mondo traditor può dare altrui,  
a che ripon' più la speranza in lui"

trans. Durling, 426.



to bring him no peace,<sup>206</sup> the voice implies, but is also certain to imperil his soul. Laura set Petrarch's heart afire, but he must remember that if he found some measure of happiness among such ills in the transitory world, the heavens contain a happiness which is 'immortal et adorno'.<sup>207</sup> In comparison to the eternal life, the pleasures of the mortal world are an illusory obstruction.

Speaking using his own voice in the verse, Petrarch uses words which affirm the transience and falsehood of worldly desires. His temporal affections are 'ombre' (l.72), while he caricatures himself as '[un] uom che sogna' (l.88), and depicts his vision as being clouded by 'lo corporeo velo' (l.114).<sup>208</sup> At the same time, however, he also indicates that he feels unable to renounce his worldly love for the woman who circumscribed his steps on heaven and on earth.<sup>209</sup> In the opening stanza, he introduces the image of the crucified Christ's outstretched arms, ready to receive him mercifully, but states that he felt fearful of following the example of others, and sensed another force spurring him on.<sup>210</sup> A thought 'dolce et agro' is enshrined within his soul, pressing on his heart with desire, and putting it to graze on hope.<sup>211</sup> This thought has grown in Petrarch since his youth and will, he suspects, drag him to the grave.<sup>212</sup> Although he wishes to 'embrace

<sup>206</sup> *Canz.* 264, l. 31.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 45–54: 'Ella l'acesse, et se l'ardor fallace  
durò molt'anni in aspettando un giorno  
che per nostra salute unqua non vene,  
or ti solleva a più beata spene  
mirando 'l ciel che ti si volve intorno  
immortal et adorno;  
ché dove del mal suo qua giù sì lieta  
vostra vaghezza acqueta  
un mover d'occhi, un ragionar, un canto,  
quanto fia quel piacer, se questo è tanto?'

Cf. *Secretum*, prohem.; *Prose*, 22.

<sup>208</sup> On the image of 'lo corporeo velo', which recurs throughout the *Canzoniere*, see D. Marks, 'The Veil and the Knot: Petrarch's Humanist Poetics,' in *The Rhetorical Poetics of the Middle Ages: Reconstructive Polyphony. Essays in Honor of Robert O. Payne*, ed. J. M. Hill and D. M. Sinnreich-Levi (London, 2000), 241–57.

<sup>209</sup> *Canz.* 127, l.93. For an interesting, but incomplete, discussion of this point, see Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses*, 100–1, 108–9.

<sup>210</sup> *Canz.* 264, ll. 9–18.

<sup>211</sup> *Canz.* 264, ll. 55–8: 'Da l'altra parte un pensier dolce et agro,  
con faticosa e dilettevol salma  
sedendosi entro l'alma,  
preme 'l cor di desio, di speme il pasce'.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 63–5 The idea of sinfulness growing from youth appears to echo the sentiments of Augustine, *Conf.* I, vii; II, i–ii.

the truth' and to 'abandon the shadows', his love for Laura leads him to forget his own best interests and draws him away from virtue.<sup>213</sup> This is clearly expressed in the second half of the poem, in a passage in which Petrarch combines an allusion to Ovid with a distinctly Augustinian treatment of the opposition of desire to reason:

For in the manner of a man who dreams  
I have death before my eyes,  
and [though] I want to mount a defence, I have no weapons.

That which I do, I see, and a poorly understood truth  
does not deceive me,<sup>214</sup> [but] rather Love forces me  
who never allows anyone  
that believes him too much to follow the path of honour  
[...]  
[He] who loves a mortal thing with such faith  
as ought to belong to God alone—  
the more he desires honour, the more it is forbidden to him.

And this with a loud voice still recalls  
[my] reason, led astray after the senses;<sup>215</sup>  
but although [reason] hears and thinks  
to return, its bad habit drives it further<sup>216</sup>  
and depicts for my eyes  
her who was born only to make me die,  
because me and herself she pleased too much.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> *Canz.* 264, ll. 72–80: 'vorre' 'l ver abbracciar, lassando l'ombre.  
Ma quell' altro voler di ch' i' son pieno  
quanti press' a lui nascon par ch' adugge,  
et parte il tempo fugge  
che scrivendo d'altrui di me non calme;  
e 'l lume de' begli occhi che mi strugge  
soavemente al suo caldo sereno  
mi ritien con un freno  
contra cui nullo ingegno o forza valme.'

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Ovid, *Met.* VII, 92–3. On which connection, Hainsworth, *Petrarch the Poet*, 85–6.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, I, 77–80, on which see Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses*, 101.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Augustine, *Conf.* VII, xvii. Compare also the role of 'bad habits' in Augustine, *Conf.* II, viii; VI, xii. It is worth noting that Augustine differed from classical authors in seeing *consuetudine* as contrary to the pursuit of virtue. On 'habit' in Augustine's moral theology, see J. Prediville, 'The Development of the Idea of Habit in the Thought of Saint Augustine,' *Traditio* 28 (1972): 29–99.

<sup>217</sup> *Canz.* 264, ll. 88–94, 99–108: 'Ché 'n guisa d'uom che sogna  
aver la morte inanzi gli occhi parme,  
et vorrei far difesa et non ò l'arme.  
Quel ch' i' fo veggio, et non m'inganna il vero  
mal conosciuto, anzi mi sforza Amore

This fills Petrarch with a sense of helplessness and grief, and the poem as a whole is shot through with a feeling of woeful paralysis and self-deception. Terms expressing confusion, conflict, and sorrow occur throughout the verse: self pity (*una pietà...forte*, l.2), tears and sighing (*lagrimar*, l.4; *sospiro...lagrimar*, l.10), an allegorical fall (*chi possendo star cadde*, l.12), fear (*temeza*, l.16), trembling (*tremor*, l.17) all occur in the first stanza, while words communicating instability and intransquillity dominate the second. This infuses Petrarch's poetic character with a sense of desperation which is transformed into a plea for help that again has an Augustinian flavour. In the opening lines, Petrarch reveals that he has fruitlessly begged God for 'those wings with which our intellect lifts itself from this mortal prison to Heaven.'<sup>218</sup> At the close of the verse, the supplications of the past are renewed and, with Death by his side, Petrarch seeks 'new counsel' for his life, unable to lay hold of the good which he sees.<sup>219</sup>

Petrarch's treatment of the unhappiness of the *occupatus* in the *De vita solitaria* and analysis of his own sorrow in the *Canzoniere* diverges from Stoic and Epicurean thought. As we have seen, in contrast to both schools of philosophy, Petrarch understood the condition of the busy man to be the result of his attachment to worldly desires and failure to recognise that contentment may only be found in God. Petrarch further explained that true happiness could only be found by shunning corporeal desires and by attaining to the truth of Christ and the soul through reason. Clearly rejecting the scepticism intrinsic to Stoic philosophy and the emphasis on pleasure which defined Epicurean thought, Petrarch's examination of the

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che la strada d'onore  
mai nol lassa seguir chi troppo il crede  
[...]  
Ché mortal cosa amar con tanta fede  
quanta a Dio sol per debito convensi  
più si disdice a chi più pregio brama.  
Et questo ad alta voce anco richiama  
la ragione sviata dietro ai sensi;  
ma perch' ell' oda et pensi  
tornare, il mal costume oltre la spigne  
et adli occhi depigne  
quella she sol per farmi morir nacque,  
perch' a me troppo et a se stessa piacque.'

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., ll. 5–8: 'ché vedendo ogni giorno il fin più presso,  
mille fiate ò chieste a Dio quel' ale  
co le quai del mortale  
carcer nostr' intelletto al Ciel si leva.'

Note the reference to 'mortale carcer'; cf. Boethius, *De cons. phil.*, II, pr. 6, 23.

<sup>219</sup> *Canz.* 264, ll. 133–6.

*occupatus*' condition seems to derive from a reading of the early works of St. Augustine, especially the *De vera religione*, a reference which is stated explicitly.<sup>220</sup> While this is in itself a significant point—a point which shall be discussed further later in this chapter—it is particularly relevant to Petrarch's treatment of *res aliena* in that it allows an understanding of the nature of his relationship with this apparently Stoic/Epicurean theme, and contextualises his use of ostensibly classical motifs.

Although Zeitlin and Tripet are quite correct to draw attention to Petrarch's assertion that those who involve themselves in others' affairs do not know where their true end lies, it is perhaps misleading to suggest that this is reflective of an assimilation of the Stoic/Epicurean critique of the *vita activa* or to infer that it testifies to a subjectivism of similar provenance. Whereas the Stoics and Epicureans each affirmed that an involvement in other people's affairs would inevitably *cause* confusion and anxiety, Petrarch's treatment of *res aliena* indicates that such an involvement is actually a *symptom* of the *occupatus*' unhappiness.

The symptomatic nature of *res aliena* is apparent in Petrarch's treatment of the theme at Z I, vi, 2. Since worldly pleasure and the ignorance of the soul's true nature inevitably lead to dissatisfaction and insecurity, Petrarch found it unsurprising that *occupati* waver in their actions, undertaking task after task in vain hope.<sup>221</sup> Always unsatisfied, these men are cheerful one moment, depressed the next, and as a result, alter everything with a relentless regularity. One day, they wear a garment which reaches the ground, but the next they put on something too scantily cut; they change their manners, their written style, and even their speech without a second thought.<sup>222</sup> 'Without doubt, having brought them in, nothing more than precipitous and importunate imitation,' Petrarch continued in the following chapter,

never content to be constrained by limits, has nourished and magnified these odious and horrid good-for-nothings. For how is it possible for those people to remain fixed on the same uninterrupted course of living who do not subject themselves to being ruled by virtue, by their better judgement, or to being governed by the advice of friends, but to emulation, to being

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<sup>220</sup> Gerosa observes—with reference to Augustine's commentary on John's Gospel—that '[l]a solitudine di cui parla Agostino è veramente quella che intende il Petrarca' but the Augustinian roots of the *De vita solitaria* are not examined in detail. Gerosa, *Umanesimo cristiano del Petrarca*, 142.

<sup>221</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 2; P I, viii; *Prose*, 384–6.

<sup>222</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 2; P I, viii; *Prose*, 386.

whirled about by the madness of others and the frenzies of the stupid? In short, those who set aside their true nature, abandon the *mores* of their forefathers, [and] venerate nothing except the alien and the foreign ought to change as often as they admire something which presents itself. There is no rule to the changing, since there is no rule to imitation; everything of another's pleases them, everything of their own displeases them; they would rather be anything than what they are...<sup>223</sup>

Having rejected virtue and their better judgement, the *occupati* subject themselves to a corporeal world which can never satisfy them. They continually chase after something that they can never attain and, while accruing sin, seem at the same time to be tortured by a sorrowful melancholy. It is not that *res aliena* necessarily distracts them from virtue, as the Stoics and Epicureans had suggested; rather, it is the *occupati*'s alienation from virtue which drives them towards *res aliena*, as St. Augustine had argued in the *De vera religione*.

Petrarch's willingness to subsume his treatment of *res aliena* into an early-Augustinian explanation of the *occupatus*' unhappiness is mirrored by his description of the condition of the *solitarius*. Once again, his often circumlocutory and rhetorical descriptions of the *solitudo animi* conceal an appreciable departure from classical notions of the *vita contemplativa*.

In examining St. Augustine as an exemplar of solitude in the second book of the *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch concentrates on the saint's time in Milan just prior to his retreat to Cassiciacum in September 386.<sup>224</sup> There, shut away in a secret corner of the garden, 'sobbing and crying', the saint 'tore his hair and beat his chest' while he battled with his inner self, desperate to find some respite from his grief.<sup>225</sup> Finally, Augustine realised

<sup>223</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 3; P I, viii; *Prose*, 388: 'Nimirum has odiosas et inamenas nugas nichil magis quam preceps et importuna nec suis unquam contenta finibus invexit imitatio, invectasque aluit auxitque. Quomodo enim fieri potest, ut vivendi tenor idem maneat his qui non se virtuti, non suo iudicio, non amicorum consiliis regendos, sed emulatione, sed aliene dementie stultorumque furoribus se volvendos tradunt? Denique qui naturam propriam exuunt, patrios mores abiciunt, nichil nisi peregrinum atque adventitium venerantur, totiens mutantur oportet, quotiens aliquid occurrerit quod mirentur. Nullus itaque mutandi, quia nullus imitandi modus: cuncta illis aliena placent, sua omnia displicent, quidlibet esse malint quam quod sunt...'

<sup>224</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 5; P II, iv; *Prose*, 438–40. See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 69–120.

<sup>225</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 5; P II, iv; *Prose*, 440: 'Ubi amarissime secum loquens, inter singultus et lacrimas, inter vulsum capillum percussamque frontem et consertis digitis amplexum genu, et quecunque magnus ac sanctus dolor elicit, tandem semel de se statuit unde in perpetuum exultaret.' Referring to Augustine, *Conf.* VIII, viii, 20.

that which was to be of delight to him for ever after. 'Expounding St. John's Gospel,' Petrarch wrote,

[St. Augustine] says: 'It is difficult to see Christ in a crowd: a certain solitude is needed for our mind, [since] God is seen with a particular solitude of intention. A crowd is noisy; that vision requires privacy.' You hear how cautiously he says that nothing except a solitude of application is necessary to see God, intending to mean that, while the human mind has within itself crowds and disturbance, physical solitude contributes nothing to the sharpening and purifying of the eyes for such a light.<sup>226</sup>

Clearly repeating the separation of *solitudo loci* and *solitudo animi*, this passage provides a telling comment on the latter. The solitude which St. Augustine himself embodied was not a physical seclusion, but rather a privacy of mind. He was, Petrarch suggests, able to see God more clearly by putting aside the mental disturbances associated with a preoccupation with the physical world.

The image of sight, which has a parallel in the language of the *Soliloquies*,<sup>227</sup> is developed further to forge a direct connection between the *solitudo animi*, the apprehension of truth, and the application of reason. That *felicitas* consisted in the inward possession of *veritas*,<sup>228</sup> Petrarch had no doubt, but this was a matter of 'seeing' Christ within the self.<sup>229</sup> The 'sight' of truth, however, was directly impeded by a dependence on the bodily senses. Observing a certain parallelism between Cicero and St. Augustine, Petrarch affirmed that it takes a powerful intellect to free the mind from the senses.<sup>230</sup> The inner Christ could only be 'seen' with the 'eyes' of the intellect, and only with reason could truth be recognised. This use of reason is intrinsic to Petrarch's understanding of the *solitudo animi*. 'Now you understand,' he wrote, addressing Philippe de Cabassoles,

to whom I refer all that has been said or ought to be said about solitude. But, since it is not given to all people to excel either by sanctity or by scholarship,

<sup>226</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 5; P II, iv; *Prose*, 440: 'Is ergo evangelium Iohannis exponens: "Difficile est" inquit "in turba videre Cristum: solitudo quedam necessaria est menti nostre, quadam solitudine intentionis videtur Deus. Turba strepitum habet; visio ista secretum desiderat." Audis ut caute videndo Deo necessariam non quamlibet sed solitudinem dixit intentionis, intelligi volens, dum suas intus turbas tumultusque suos humana mens habeat, acuendis ad tantum lumen purgandisque oculis solitudinem corpoream nil prodesse.' Quoting Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium*, P.L. 35, col. 1533.

<sup>227</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, 12.

<sup>228</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 3; P I, iii; *Prose*, 326.

<sup>229</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 8; P I, v; *Prose*, 350–2.

<sup>230</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 8; P I, v; *Prose*, 352, quoting Cicero, *Tusc.* I, xvi, 37; I, xvi, 38.

[or] by distinguished *otium* to merit the love and recognition of posterity, so that neither present glory nor the fame of ages to come—for which many have voluntarily poured out their lives and in return have become famous—ought to elicit excitement, how much use is it to you... that this briefest (*quantuluncunq[ue]*) period of life, for which no hope of recalling and repairing remains once it has fled, is yours? Moreover, no person with moderate learning is forbidden from acquiring through reflection and reading a mind which is healthy, sustained by peaceful concerns and unimpeded by the chains of [worldly] things, subject to God and to reason, but in other respects free, and also a body brought away from its heavy yoke and serving only the mind...<sup>231</sup>

Despite some superficial similarities with Stoic and Epicurean thought, therefore, it does not seem unjustified to suggest that Petrarch's understanding of the *solitudo animi* was at some remove from the notion of a *vita contemplativa* he would have encountered in his sources for classical philosophy. Whereas the *vita contemplativa* was conceived as a pursuit of philosophy in opposition to the idea of a *vita activa*, itself defined in terms of the anxiety arising from involvement in *res aliena*, Petrarch's *solitudo animi* was based on a moral theology apparently derived from St. Augustine's early works which understood the pursuit of *felicitas* and the cause of unhappiness in quite different terms. As we have seen, the unhappiness of the *occupatus* sprang from his fruitless attachment to temporalities, and ignorance of his true end and of true happiness. His involvement in other people's affairs was just one manifestation of this reliance on corporeal things and false belief that satiety could be found in a fleeting world. In Petrarch's analysis, as in that of St. Augustine, he could only overcome his sorrow by forsaking his senses for the intellect, and by using his reason to recognise the truth of his own nature—the truth that the *vera felicitas* lay in Christ alone. Consequently, in opposition to the classical notion of the *vita contemplativa*, Petrarch uses the term 'solitudo animi' to describe the condition of the person who had renounced the errors and sorrows of the *occupatus*. The person who possessed a *solitudo animi* paid no heed to

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<sup>231</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 4; P I, vii; *Prose*, 376–8: 'Iam intelligis ad quos quecunq[ue] de solitudine dicta seu dicenda sunt referam. Verum quia non omnibus est datum vel sanctitate vel literis excellere, preclaroque otio posteritatis amorem ac notitiam promereri, ut nec presens gloria nec sequentis evi fama sollicitet, pro qua multi vitam voluntarie profuderunt et ob id ipsum clari sunt habiti, quanti facias... hoc quantulumcunq[ue] vite tempus, cuius cum semel effluxerit recolligendi reparandique spes nulla relinquitur, tuum esse? quodque nulli mediocriter erudito vetitum est, cogitando saltem legendoque placidis fotum curis et rerum vinculis explicitum animum habere, Deo et ratione subditum, cetera liberum; corpus quoque gravi iugo eductum animoque soli serviens...'



corporeal things, and exercised his reason, and recognised the truth that his end and the one happiness lay only in Christ. He lived, in every sense, as a pilgrim in the world, observing his surroundings at a mental distance, paying no heed to the physical. He possessed a solitude of the mind in the sense that his intellect was uncrowded by the effects of corporeal desires, and could exist in the world almost oblivious to its many fleeting allurements.

### 6. *Petrarch and the Countryside*

Although Petrarch associates the *solitudo animi* with a person's interior condition, and stresses the primacy of the *solitudo animi* over the *solitudo loci*, it is nevertheless hard to ignore the fact that he places a high emphasis on rusticity in his treatment of solitude. As we have already seen, Petrarch's sensitivity for natural beauty heavily informs his description of the solitary life he enjoyed at Vacluse, and played a significant part in the invitations he extended to friends in the *Familiares*. Similarly, natural imagery is an intrinsic part of the contrast between *rus* and *urbs* in the *De vita solitaria*, and the beauty and tranquillity of the countryside are integral to the life of the *solitarius*. This stress on the countryside raises questions not merely about the separation of the *solitudo animi* and the *solitudo loci*, but also about the relationship between Petrarch's apparently Augustinian moral philosophy and his use of classical source materials. On the one hand, the reader is obliged to ask why, if true solitude was a purely internal condition, Petrarch persisted with such a marked enthusiasm for the rural environment and gave such prominence to the countryside in describing solitude. On the other hand, although there is no evidence to suggest that either Stoic or Epicurean philosophers based their exhortations to rural retreat on a sensitivity for natural beauty, the role played by natural imagery in Petrarch's writings clearly has antecedents in classical literature and the priority this is accorded must be queried.

In the most general sense, Petrarch's manipulation of the *rus-urbs* contrast may be seen as a convenient means of representing the internal conditions of the *occupatus* and the *solitarius*. Although the physicality of city and countryside do not themselves contribute to the unhappiness of the one and the contentment of the other, they act as a convenient means of depicting the moral status of the two figures. While the degradations and confusion of city life are not the cause of the *occupatus*' misery, his attachment to them reflects his inner insecurity and improper desires. By the

same token, the tranquillity of the countryside cannot be viewed as the predicate of the *solitarius*' peace, his retreat to the fields and murmuring streams is an expression of his disinterest in the pleasures of the town.

That is not, however, to say that Petrarch envisaged the solitary man as living anywhere but the countryside. Rather than being the source of his contentment, his withdrawal to a rural environment appears to be a consequence of his inner condition. Having substituted reason for the senses, Petrarch seems to have foreseen that the *solitarius* would seek out country living as the setting most congenial to his state of mind and moral condition. The river banks and woodland groves do not appear to enhance his state, but rather the *solitarius* finds such a place appropriate to his position. It is for this reason that, at the very beginning of the *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch stressed that he sought to praise not the name of solitude, but the good things which are proper to solitude: far from hating men, he merely despised sin, especially his own.<sup>232</sup> Similarly, later in the text, he speaks of his desire to escape the crowd because of a discrepancy of tastes, or perhaps because of his wish to avoid cultivating gossipy witnesses to his life.<sup>233</sup>

While the separation of the solitude of mind and the solitude of place is preserved by the *solitarius*' general relationship with the countryside, however, two specific aspects of Petrarch's enthusiasm for the countryside merit further consideration. In addition to providing a convenient literary expression for the contrast between the *occupatus* and the *solitarius*, and furnishing the solitary man with an environment befitting his condition, Petrarch explicitly associates the countryside with both poetic composition and religious meditation. It is with respect to these two associations that the separation of the *solitudo animi* and the *solitudo loci*, and the role of classical literature must be questioned most carefully.

The identification of rustic retreat with literary endeavour and particularly with poetic composition runs throughout Petrarch's discussion of solitude. In the *Exul ab Italia*, he signalled the connection by highlighting the fact that in Vaucluse he was in the company of the Muses,<sup>234</sup> and this is mirrored by the fact that, even tormented by love, he was able to 'gather now rhymes and verses, now herbs and flowers' in the *Canzoniere*.<sup>235</sup>

<sup>232</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, i, 3; P I, I; *Prose*, 300.

<sup>233</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 8; P I, vi; *Prose*, 354.

<sup>234</sup> See n. 87, above.

<sup>235</sup> *Canz.* 114, 1.6: 'or rime e versi, or colgo erbette et fiori'.

Echoing the sentiments of the *Familiares*, Petrarch responded to Quintilian's views in the *De vita solitaria* by suggesting that provision should be made for access to woods and fields, and—'what is especially pleasing to the Muses'—to the bank beside a murmuring stream, so that in such a setting one could sow the seeds of new projects in the field of genius.<sup>236</sup>

There are clearly classical parallels to be observed, and the associations—already noted—need not be laboured. The connection between rusticity and composition seem to point to Petrarch's willingness to borrow motifs from such sources as Virgil's bucolic verses and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Similarly, in *Ep.* II, 2, for example, Horace links the attractions of the countryside not merely with a freedom from cares,<sup>237</sup> but also with a freedom for study and writing. All writers, he claims, despise the town and yearn for the 'sacred grove.'<sup>238</sup>

Despite the literary associations which Petrarch's pairing evokes, however, it would not necessarily be valid to assume from the repetition of imagery that his conception of solitude as an interior condition should be qualified by granting place a determining influence on a solitary life which involved composition. Far from conflicting with Petrarch's solitude, the image of the countryside as the home of the Muses may be seen to complement the distinction between the *solitudo animi* and the *solitudo loci*. There is no reason to doubt that Petrarch genuinely believed that the countryside was the most fitting place for poetic composition, and that the Muses indeed resided beside the murmuring streams. In approving of Quintilian's views in the *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch pointed out that while the genius of poets may flourish in any setting, it flourishes most readily in 'free and open places', as Virgil, Cicero, and even St. Cyprian attested.<sup>239</sup>

<sup>236</sup> *De vita solitaria* Z I, v, 1–2; P I, vii; *Prose*, 366: 'Itaque si inter tantas voces audior consiliumque novum non despicitur, et hos sequor et, longius evectus, si loci optio integra est, scripturum novi aliquid admoneo, quotiens se exemplo Demosthenis includet, illud ante provisum sit ut, post secundos ingenii successus, egressu facili in silvas et loca virentia, quoque nichil est Musis amicus, queruli amnis in ripam gravedinem possit fatigationemque deponere...'

<sup>237</sup> Horace, *Ep.* II, 2, ll. 12–15.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 77–80.

<sup>239</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 2; P I, vii; *Prose*, 366–8: 'Equidem ut huic tandem articulo finem faciam, et Marcus Tullius et Virgilius Maro, quos eloquentie principes latine nemo eloquens negabit, huic consilio herebant; dum alter cum sepe alias tum presertim ad tractatum legum civilium accessurus, frondosas quercus et delectabiles secessus, quodque ibi scriptum memini "ripam et umbram", et procerissimas populos, et concentum avium, et strepitum fluviorum, atque equas in partes scissi amnis in medio insulam parvam et huic nostre simillimam quereret; alter autem suum Alexim, quisquis is est, pastorio carmine laudaturus, "inter densas umbrosa cacumina fagos" assidue veniens, solus in montibus et

This, however, was a part of a solitary life devoted to the active cultivation of virtue. In the same passage, Petrarch points out that poetic composition was 'an active rest and a restful work' and, in doing so, evokes the spirit of the opening chapters of the *De otio religioso*.<sup>240</sup> The solitary man is still presented as seeking the peace of the countryside because it reflected his interior condition, but the poetic composition which he could also pursue in a rural environment is presented as an adjunct to his cultivation of virtue. Having spent his days composing verses in the fields and glades, Petrarch suggest that the *solitarius* could then return to the 'narrow and secret chamber' beloved of Demosthenes without having wasted any time or effort.<sup>241</sup> Augustine himself, Petrarch observes, longed for 'vines and branches and leaves and reeds' and recognised that while they also befitted his virtue, they were also suitable for the profitable exercise of literary ability.<sup>242</sup> Where a man has achieved the *solitudo animi*, Petrarch seems to imply, he could readily exercise his poetic talents in the countryside which reflected his inner condition as part of his pursuit of virtue. The classical motifs which Petrarch so willingly emulated thus supplement, rather than supplant his underlying moral philosophy.

Poetic composition, however, plays only a relatively minor role in the *De vita solitaria*. A far greater emphasis is placed on the rural landscape as the proper setting for religious meditation. As we have already noted, in the first book, the *solitarius* chooses the countryside as the location for his prayers, and reflects on the persons of the Trinity on a hilltop or in a grassy meadow. In the second book, figures from Scripture in particular testify to the association. Abraham,<sup>243</sup> Jacob,<sup>244</sup> Elijah,<sup>245</sup> and Moses<sup>246</sup> are all mentioned as having received the Lord and His angels in the simplicity

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silvis id faceret... Cyprianus, fide autem prior et martyrio clarus nec obscurus eloquio, tale quiddam et sensisse videtur et scripsisse...' Quoting Cicero, *De legibus*, I, iv, 14; Virgil, *Ecl.*, II, 3 (arguably *Ecl.* II, 3–4: Petrarch gives 'assidue veniens' for Virgil's 'assidue veniebat').

<sup>240</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 2; P I, vii; *Prose*, 366: '...et actiosa requies et quietus labor...'

<sup>241</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 2; P I, vii; *Prose*, 366: '...nec ideo minus in arvum ingenii rerum semina iacere, et inter ipsum quietis reparandique animi tempus venturo labori materiam preparare, utile simul et iucundum opus, et actiosa requies et quietus labor, ut cum ad angustam illam Demosthenis ac secretam aream reditum fuerit, sententiarum sementem, inutilibus excussis, votiva verborum messis equiparet; atque ita nullum studio tempus iners aut inane preterfluat.'

<sup>242</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 2; P I, vii; *Prose*, 368.

<sup>243</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, ii, 3; P II, ii; *Prose*, 418–20.

<sup>244</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, ii, 5; P II, ii; *Prose*, 420–22.

<sup>245</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, ii, 7; P II, iii; *Prose*, 424–6.

<sup>246</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, ii, 5; P II, iii; *Prose*, 422–4.

of the countryside rather than in the splendid surroundings of the city. Speaking of Isaac's manner, Petrarch concludes that nowhere is more suitable for the meditative man than 'agrestis solitudo'<sup>247</sup> and points out that while Christ had no need of solitude, He nevertheless sought out the countryside for both teaching and meditation.<sup>248</sup> Other personalities, such as Jerome, further evidence the connection. Feeling that it reflected his own experiences and preferences, the example of St. Bernard of Clairvaux was especially dear to Petrarch. St. Bernard is praised for having had no masters other than the oaks and beeches, and for having learned all the literature he knew in the woods and the fields. Writing in Vaucluse, surrounded by his many books, Petrarch felt a particular sympathy with this holy example.<sup>249</sup>

As with poetic composition, the association between religious meditation and the countryside is less firmly rooted in the classical emphasis on the importance of place than initially appears. Discussing exemplary figures from ancient history towards the end of the second book, Petrarch rhetorically questioned whether philosophers and poets of his own time and of ages yet to come would not shun cities and seek quiet seclusion. 'Often,' he went on to explain,

a place provides a stimulus for the mind; therefore an open and free [place] is to be wished for those who apply their mind—which the innumerable forms of vanity [to be found] among people weigh down and tear apart—to elevated matters, and [seeing that] the death which will come in finds a thousand ways in through the windows.<sup>250</sup>

The precise wording of this passage is important and undermines the possible suggestion that it might call into question the separation of the *solitudo loci* and the *solitudo animi*. In contrast to the physics of Stoic and Epicurean moral philosophy, Petrarch declines to suggest that 'an open and free place' is related to the contemplation of 'elevated matters' in an exclusively causal fashion. Rather than 'an open and free place' serving as the predicate of meditation, Petrarch clearly states that such a location

<sup>247</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, ii, 4; *P II*, ii; *Prose*, 422: 'Nullus enim locus, nulla pars etatis aptior meditantibus, quam et agrestis solitudo et, iuvenili fervore preteritis relictisque, ut ita dixerim, a tergo meridianis horis, placatioris vite tranquillitas iam vergentis ad vesperam.'

<sup>248</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, v, 2; *P II*, x; *Prose*, 504.

<sup>249</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 14; *P II*, vii; *Prose*, 460–2.

<sup>250</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, vii, 1; *P II*, xii; *Prose*, 526: 'Sepe locus ingenio stimulos admovet; ideo apertus et liber optandus est his, qui animum rebus altis applicuere, quem in populis innumere vanitatum forme depriment atque discerpunt, et mille vias per fenestras ingressura mors invenit.'

may stimulate the minds of those who already apply themselves to 'elevated matters'. The location is, in other words, congenial to the mental condition of the philosopher or poet who wishes to contemplate higher matters; it serves as a stimulus rather than as a cause. By the same token, the 'innumerable forms of vanity' which are found among people do not inevitably prevent the philosopher from applying his mind to 'higher matters', but they may stimulate his all-too human failings. In emphasising the position of 'those who apply their minds to elevated matters', Petrarch continues to place the moral autonomy of the agent and his interior condition at the very heart of solitude; the separation of the *solitudo animi* and the *solitudo loci* is preserved.

This is an impression which appears to be given credence in the rhetoric of praise which Petrarch deploys elsewhere in the second book. In a passage inserted at the suggestion of Giovanni degli Abbarbagliati, Grand Prior of the Camaldolese Order, and included many years after the *De vita solitaria* was begun, Petrarch recalled an episode from Peter Damian's hagiographical work on the founder of his order.<sup>251</sup> While still a young man, St. Romualdus would, it was said, often stop in the 'silent recesses of the woods' while hunting, and 'transfixed, as though struck by a desire for heaven,' would exclaim

O what a delectable [place]. How tranquil and how opportune a location for those wishing to serve God! How much more happily the friends of God might live here than in the cities!<sup>252</sup>

This quotation implies that those whose orientation is already known would find the 'silent recesses of the woods' an environment fitting for their endeavours and a respite in which they might actively continue their service of God. Again, the setting is congenial to the interior condition of the *amici Dei*, rather than a cause of their virtue. Petrarch carefully avoids suggestion that a life in the service of God was impossible in the city, but indicates that the rustic environment would better reflect their inward search for the divine. Indeed, it is perhaps apposite that Petrarch drew inspiration from the Camaldolese tradition, which combined both coenobitic and eremitic elements. For Romualdus, the whole world was a

<sup>251</sup> Q.v. *Sen.* XVI, 3; Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 231–2.

<sup>252</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 16; P II, viii; *Prose*, 464: 'Itaque dum venanti sepe taciti nemorum recessus occurrerent, celesti mox desiderio percussus herebat, atque ad se versus aiebat: "O quam delectabilis, quam tranquillus et quam Deo servire volentibus oportunus locus; quanto melius hic amici dei quam in urbibus habitarent."'

hermitage, but the countryside was nevertheless a congenial environment in which to serve God.<sup>253</sup> Appropriately for Petrarch—who briefly sought to establish a quasi-monastic community at Vaucluse—Peter Damian also recorded that Romualdus was originally a lay-hermit who established religious societies in a rural setting for canons ‘who had been living in a secular fashion . . . to live together as a community.’<sup>254</sup>

Although Petrarch’s association of religious meditation and the countryside is not incompatible with the natural imagery of classical bucolic, it is similarly commensurate with the division between the *solitudo animi* and the *solitudo loci* which he developed out of his reading of St. Augustine’s early moral theology. Presenting the countryside as an environment fitting to the outlook of a man who had suppressed desire and embraced reason in his pursuit of virtue, Petrarch was careful to ensure that prayer and contemplation were not portrayed as reliant on rural tranquillity, but rather as suited to the grassy fields and woodland groves. The primacy of the solitude of mind is assiduously preserved—often only subtly in delicately-worded, but telling, phrases—and it appears clear that it is the inward peace of the solitary man which determines his appreciation of the natural world, rather than the beauty of the countryside which shapes his inner condition.

As Petrarch suggests in the many parallels he draws with patristic and medieval figures, this has a strong Christian heritage, and it is perhaps not unexpected that his appreciation of the countryside should have complemented his description of true solitude in terms of the early-Augustinian opposition of desire and reason. The idea of rustic retreat was, indeed, an important part of Christian thought from late antiquity to the foundation of the mendicant orders in the central Middle Ages. Although for the desert fathers, the pursuit of holiness was often to be associated with an ascetic life in a barren environment, other traditions of observance drew from classical thought an affection for the natural world, but transforming it into the delight in a setting which reflected inner peace and the celebration of God’s creation. Indeed, the utility of rusticity in the *De vita solitaria* has a particularly interesting analogue in the thought of St. Francis of Assisi—so important in Petrarch’s description of the *solitudo animi*—for whom the countryside was a favoured place for prayer and reflection, even though his mendicant life often led him to cities. Perhaps

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<sup>253</sup> H. Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism. A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe 1000–1150* (London, 1984), 1, 25.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 47, 90.



more so than many medieval figures, St. Francis saw in the natural world a very real expression of God's ineffable love, and found in the countryside a setting which could reflect—rather than condition—his inward striving for virtue. But in St. Augustine's works also, rustic surroundings were accorded a prominent role. As we have already seen, through his reading of the *De doctrina christiana*, Petrarch himself observed that St. Augustine saw an affinity between inward peace and verdant surroundings. Garden imagery runs through the *Confessiones*, and it is important to note—as Petrarch so clearly identified—that Augustine depicted one of the defining moments in his religious development as occurring in the green and peaceful garden in Milan. Religious self-transformation, the re-orientation of the self towards virtue, and the inward peace that were the rewards of a godly life were, as Petrarch recognised, strongly linked in St. Augustine's thought, and the subtle connection between rusticity and the virtuous man's inner condition was eminently amenable to the opposition between reason and desire found in the saint's early works.

### 7. *Solitude and Otium*

Although the *De otio religioso* and the *De vita solitaria* display many differences, they nevertheless appear to describe very similar concepts. Like *otium*, solitude seems to denote the moral programme which the *Secretum* was designed to inculcate. Despite being cast in a language which is at variance with that of the *De otio religioso*, and expressed in a manner which is in many ways less rigorous, the idea of the *solitudo animi* is based on the use of reason to apprehend God, and the suppression of the worldly desires which engender confusion and obscure truth. A mental concept more than a description of a physical condition, like *otium*, it is opposed to the temptations of the world and the vicissitudes of fortune, and is predicated on the instability and falseness of the temporal. Just as *otium* describes not a literal form of leisure, but an inward *vacatio a mendacibus*, solitude indicates an isolation of the self from worldly desires, an inward, psychological, and moral solitude at some distance from the literal meaning of the word. The two concepts, as Jennifer Petrie has observed, each relate to specific activities—meditation, prayer, and study—which help the *otiosus* or the *solitarius* to expunge his attachment to the world, and to embrace virtue more fully.<sup>255</sup>

<sup>255</sup> Petrie, 'Petrarch *solitarius*,' 32–3.

The debt which the *De vita solitaria* owes to the theology of St. Augustine is, however, of greatest interest to our present purposes, and is of greatest relevance to understanding the character of Petrarch's thought and its place in the history of early Italian humanism. In common with the idea of *otium* explored in the previous chapter, Petrarch's *solitudo* is based on an understanding of the moral life derived from St. Augustine's early exploration of the role of the intellect. As with his treatment of *otium*, Petrarch appropriated classical imagery and exploited similarities between classical literature and Augustinian theology while propounding an understanding of the life of virtue which has its roots in Augustine's early, introspective works. At some distance from both Stoic and Epicurean notions of a *vita contemplativa*, Petrarch's *solitudo* is—like *otium*—a cipher for the practical application of the moral programme described in the *Secretum*, and is reliant on the *meditatio mortis* and the application of reason in the context of grace.

#### 8. *The De Vita Solitaria and Later Humanistic Thought*

As we have seen, Petrarch's conception of solitude in the *De vita solitaria* was based on the idea of the attainment of a *solitudo animi*. Using reason to arrive at a true understanding of his nature and of the *vera felicitas*, the *solitarius* would remain aloof from temporal things and would be a pilgrim in the body, seeking only virtue. Although the countryside could mirror his internal condition, the *solitarius* did not require rustic seclusion, and while the crowded streets of the city were not to Petrarch's taste, solitude did not entail isolation from the company of others.

It was cognition—and not volition—which constituted the core of Petrarch's understanding of solitude. Transcending the distinction between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* which had dominated classical thought, Petrarch instead followed the young St. Augustine in stressing the importance of a knowledge of the self and of true happiness, and adopted the saint's generally consistent scepticism for location and isolation.

Despite attempts to portray the *De vita solitaria* as a treatise which pointed towards later Renaissance attitudes to the classical *vita activa/vita contemplativa* dichotomy, Petrarch's understanding of solitude stands apart from much humanistic thought on this subject. Its unusual position is evident in at least three distinctive features. First, Petrarch—unlike many later humanists—subverted the classical distinction between the active and contemplative lives, and instead offered a view of solitude that was dependent on the intellect rather than on place, activity, or company.

Second, the distinctive role played by cognition in Petrarch's conception of *solitudo* is at a remove both from ancient thought and from the later Renaissance emphasis on the will. Third, whereas subsequent generations of humanists looked to classical literature for inspiration, and took the Christian quality of their works from Augustine's anti-Manichean or fideistic treatises, Petrarch appears to have read ancient philosophy primarily through the lens of St. Augustine's early, introspective works, including the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*, and adapted classical ideas to a quite different purpose.

This is not, of course, to say that Petrarch's view of solitude was entirely without analogues in later humanistic literature, or that he differed from all subsequent humanists in the same manner. On the one hand, Lombardo della Seta's *De bono solitudinis*, for example, bears many similarities with the *De vita solitaria*, and was not only warmly praised by Petrarch himself,<sup>256</sup> but was also erroneously attributed to Petrarch before della Seta's authorship was firmly established.<sup>257</sup> And on the other hand, humanistic attitudes towards the solitary life varied so much in the generations after Petrarch's death that it would perhaps be absurd to suggest that each work differed from the *De vita solitaria* to the same extent and in the same respects. But the peculiarity of Petrarch's treatise—and especially its early-Augustinian character—is nevertheless difficult to ignore, and can readily be appreciated when his view of solitude is compared to the thought of those outstanding humanists, Coluccio Salutati and Lorenzo Valla.

(a) *Coluccio Salutati*

As we observed in the previous chapter, Salutati's thought on solitude, *otium*, and the relative merits of the active and contemplative lives underwent some development during his life, and it is hence necessary to employ some caution in dealing with his works.<sup>258</sup> Even taking account of this evolution, however, it is possible to discern certain central differences between Salutati's approach to the problem of the solitary or contemplative life and Petrarch's view of solitude in the *De vita solitaria*, and two of his most well-known works on this subject repay serious study.<sup>259</sup>

<sup>256</sup> *Sen.* XV, 3.

<sup>257</sup> *Epistolae de rebus familiaribus et variae*, ed. G. Fracassetti, 3 vols. (Florence, 1859–63), 3:505–13; Baron, 'Franciscan Poverty,' 12.

<sup>258</sup> See especially Witt, *Hercules*, 331–54.

<sup>259</sup> For useful discussions of Salutati's engagement with the problem of the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, see, for example, V. Kahn, 'Coluccio Salutati on the active and

In contrast to Petrarch, Salutati drew a sharp distinction between the active and contemplative lives both in his letter to Pellegrino Zambecari (scr. 23 May 1398) and in the *De nobilitate legum et medicinae* (completed August 1399),<sup>260</sup> and accepted the superiority of the *vita contemplativa* while nevertheless recommending the *vita activa* as the mode of life best suited to the Christian citizen.<sup>261</sup>

Although Witt is correct to point out that Salutati attempted to blur the difference between the active and contemplative lives in recommending the former,<sup>262</sup> Salutati's desire to rebut his friend's determination to resign the chancellorship of Bologna to become a hermit demanded that the letter to Zambecari be structured around the assumption of the opposition of the two modes of living. So, too, in the *De nobilitate*, a similar trend can be detected. Although Salutati concentrates on contrasting the lives of speculation and action, and distinguished between the speculative and the contemplative, he nevertheless sustained a clear distinction between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* in an early part of the treatise,<sup>263</sup> and we might be forgiven for treating his unwillingness to equate the contemplative and the speculative with some degree of scepticism.

In both works, it is the life of contemplation which is given first place in Salutati's estimations. In his letter to Zambecari, for example, he asserted that:

the contemplative life is more sublime for its high level of thought; more delectable with the sweetness of tranquillity and meditation; more self-sufficient since it requires fewer things; more divine since it considers divine rather than human things; more noble since it exercises the intellect . . .<sup>264</sup>

And in the *De nobilitate*, Salutati affirmed that the active life was inferior to that of contemplation, which is 'the end of all actions and the eternal perfection of joys never attainable on earth, but attained in the homeland where God will be all in all and we will not see as in a mirror darkly.'<sup>265</sup>

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contemplative lives,' in *Arbeit, Musse, Meditation*, ed. Vickers, 153–79; Bonnell, 'An Early Humanistic View'.

<sup>260</sup> For Salutati's distinction between active and contemplative lives, see Kahn, 'Coluccio Salutati,' 157ff.

<sup>261</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 3:285–308; trans. by R. G. Witt in *The Earthly Republic*, ed. Kohl and Witt, 93–114; Salutati, *De nobilitate*. References to the letter to Pellegrino Zambecari will be taken from *The Earthly Republic*.

<sup>262</sup> Witt, *Hercules*, 352.

<sup>263</sup> Salutati, *De nobilitate*, 36–8.

<sup>264</sup> *The Earthly Republic*, 111.

<sup>265</sup> Salutati, *De nobilitate*, 36–8; translation quoted at Witt, *Hercules*, 332–3.

Yet in each work, it is the active life which Salutati comes to endorse more fully. In his letter to Zambeccari, he stated that '[t]he active life is inferior, but many times is to be preferred,'<sup>266</sup> and contended not only that solitude would merely intensify his friend's suffering, but also that he would be better served by pursuing a *vita activa*, which 'produces and begets' contemplation. So, too, Salutati's assertion of the superiority of law to medicine in the *De nobilitate* was inextricably bound up with his affirmation that the active life was better than the speculative.

But while it is immediately clear that Salutati's (occasionally ambiguous) conclusions differ significantly from Petrarch's endorsement of solitude, it is perhaps the Florentine chancellor's reasoning that are of most interest in highlighting the distance which separates to two men. Salutati's stance in the *De nobilitate* and the letter was based on two key principles, each of which represents a line of argument which would have been alien to Petrarch.

In the first place, the superiority of the active life over the contemplative could be justified by an appeal to the scope of the benefit conferred by each mode of living. Whereas the *vita contemplativa* was introspective and individualistic, Salutati argued, the *vita activa* was outward-looking and socio-political in form. In the letter to Zambeccari, for example, Salutati suggested that while his friend could find a *tranquillitas animi* by subjecting his passions to the rule of reason, the Bolognese chancellor should prefer to serve 'society and family in an active life devoted to God.'<sup>267</sup> Although this necessarily demanded that the active citizen must be 'perfectly motivated on account of God and love God,' and obliged Salutati to argue that the *vita activa* must be 'mixed' with the *vita contemplativa* to a certain extent,<sup>268</sup> the life of activity is to be esteemed more highly than that of contemplation because the former puts the love of God to the service of others, while the latter is devoted only to the self. Similarly, in the *De nobilitate*, Salutati used Aristotle and Cicero to contend that since law is devoted to the good of the state and society, the active life—which is embodied by law—'benefits many, [and] at times the whole community'.<sup>269</sup> Seeing that medicine—the archetype of speculation—serves only individuals (the patient and the doctor), the speculative life is of less benefit

<sup>266</sup> *The Earthly Republic*, 111.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 109–10.

<sup>269</sup> Witt, *Hercules*, 336; Salutati, *De nobilitate*, 134, 142, 162, 168, 180, 230, 232, 244; cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, i, 1094a; Cicero, *De orat.* I, viii, 32; *Tusc.* V, ii, 3.

than, and hence inferior to, the active life. While we must, of course, remember that Salutati distinguished between the speculative and the contemplative, it is difficult not to be struck by the fact that his assertion of the inferiority of the speculative life in the *De nobilitate* is structurally very similar in this regard to his discussion of the limitations of the contemplative life in the letter to Zambeccari, and we could perhaps be forgiven for eliding the speculative and the contemplative in defiance of Salutati's (rather unconvincing) distinction between the two.

Salutati's appeal to benefit has no analogue in Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*. Although Petrarch discussed many political figures—including Cicero, the two Scipios, and Demosthenes—his concern is to illustrate the contribution which the *vita solitaria* made to their personal moral condition, and has no recourse to the potential benefits accruing to the state from their solitude. Indeed, it is telling that only a few years before Salutati wrote to Zambeccari, Pier Paolo Vergerio attacked Petrarch's criticism of Cicero's renunciation of solitude for precisely this reason: writing in the character of the ancient orator in 1394, Vergerio defended a life of activity on the grounds that it was a matter of virtue to serve one's country and mankind, and to eschew the introspectiveness which Petrarch had advocated.<sup>270</sup>

In the second place, Salutati's belief in the primacy of the *vita activa* was justified with reference to the superiority of the will over the intellect. Although, as we have already seen in a previous chapter, Salutati often spoke highly of the intellect, and argued for the abstract merit of the contemplative life on the basis that the intellect was man's noblest faculty in the letter to Zambeccari, the *De nobilitate* makes a strong case for the *vita activa* by appealing to the will. As Ronald Witt has put it, the pre-eminence of the will allowed Salutati 'to transform Cicero's conception of the active life into a Christian ideal: that of the patriot in a Christian commonwealth.'<sup>271</sup>

In discussing the relative certitude attainable by law and medicine in the *De nobilitate*, Salutati was moved to reflect on the knowledge which is accessible to the intellect, and hence on the role of that most noble of human faculties. For Salutati, it was an inescapable fact that the intellect was severely limited. Man is not only incapable of comprehending

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<sup>270</sup> Pier Paolo Vergerio, *Epistolario di Pier Paolo Vergerio*, ed. L. Smith (Rome, 1934), 436–45.

<sup>271</sup> Witt, *Hercules*, 346.

natural phenomena in their entirety, but is also unable to know God's infinite nature in its totality.<sup>272</sup> The goal of humankind was thus not to *know* God (since such a thing would be impossible), but 'rather to enjoy him eternally, and this enjoyment is properly a function of the will inspired by divine grace.'<sup>273</sup> Just as beatitude was the fulfilment of all the will's desires, so may man merit felicity through acts of the will. This was not, of course, to deny that the intellect had a certain role to play; but was instead intended to signify that its function was to minister to the will, as we have previously noted. The intellect provided a knowledge of the self which served as the basis for the effective use of the will in pursuit of the good.<sup>274</sup> Although Salutati uses this line of argument principally to demonstrate that law—which serves to regulate human action and to guide men towards virtue—is superior to medicine, the dominance of the will also allowed him to defend the superiority of the *vita activa* over the speculative life.

In mounting such an argument, Salutati could hardly have differed more profoundly from the reasoning of Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*. Although some allowance must be made for Salutati's distinction between the speculative and the contemplative, the terms in which he approached his problem are diametrically opposed to the precepts on which Petrarch based his defence of the solitary life. Whereas Salutati's assertion of the superiority of the active life was derived—in this case—from his belief in the pre-eminence of the will, Petrarch based his understanding of solitude on the primacy of the intellect. For Petrarch, cognition was sufficient for a man to inure himself to the fleeting temptations of the temporal world, and to achieve a *solitudo animi* which was synonymous both with the pursuit of virtue and with solitude; indeed, it is the supremacy of the intellect which allowed Petrarch to transcend the classical distinction between the active and contemplative lives, and to arrive at an understanding of solitude that was wholly interior. For Salutati, however, the will alone was sufficient, and it is this emphasis on the will which ties Salutati to the ultimate separation of two modes of existence.

It will perhaps come as no surprise that Salutati's defence of the active life in both the *De nobilitate* and the letter to Zambeccari drew significantly on the theology of St. Augustine, and Victoria Kahn has done much

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<sup>272</sup> Salutati, *De nobilitate*, 164–66.

<sup>273</sup> Witt, *Hercules*, 339–40.

<sup>274</sup> Salutati, *De nobilitate*, 36.



to illustrate the debt which the Florentine chancellor owed to the bishop of Hippo in this regard.<sup>275</sup> Even the briefest of examples gives a sense of the extent to which Salutati looked to Augustine's works. Although he was certainly well aware of classical treatments of the active and contemplative lives, Salutati appears to have borrowed the distinction between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* from Augustine's *De civitate Dei*,<sup>276</sup> and his occasional willingness to blur the distinction between the two seems to derive from the same source. So, too, his claim that Zambecari should devote himself to the service of God and others is supported with a lengthy quotation from the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*.<sup>277</sup> Moreover, as both Gilson and Kahn have observed, Salutati's claim in the *De nobilitate* that man can love God, but cannot know Him is taken from Augustine's *De ordine* and also has echoes of the *De Trinitate*,<sup>278</sup> and he borrows the notion that knowing what is right entails acting rightly from the *De civitate Dei*.<sup>279</sup> Additionally, as we have already observed in an earlier chapter, Salutati's belief in the freedom of the will was Augustinian in origin.

But while both Petrarch and Salutati drew heavily on St. Augustine's theology in the works discussed in this chapter, they looked to different aspects of the saint's thought, and viewed the relationship between classical philosophy and Augustinian ethics in a different manner.

In the first place, Salutati's most substantive defence of the active life in the *De nobilitate* is based on an understanding of St. Augustine's theology which is at variance with Petrarch's interpretation of the saint's early works. As we noted in chapter II, while both Salutati and Petrarch drew significantly from St. Augustine for their views of the relationship between the will and the intellect, Petrarch used the saint's earlier, introspective works—such as the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*—to emphasise the pre-eminence of the intellect, and Salutati employed the bishop of Hippo's anti-Manichean dialogues and mature treatises to stress the primacy of the will. This divergence of interpretation appears to have been transferred to their respective approaches to solitude and contemplation.

<sup>275</sup> Kahn, 'Coluccio Salutati'.

<sup>276</sup> Bonnell, 'An Early Humanistic View'; Kahn, 'Coluccio Salutati,' 157; cf. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, XIX, 19.

<sup>277</sup> *The Earthly Republic*, 109; cf. Augustine, *En. in Psalmos*, LI, vi, 4.

<sup>278</sup> Augustine, *De ordine*, II, xvi, 44; II, xviii, 47; *De Trinitate*, IX, i, 1; Salutati, *De nobilitate*, 352, n. 1; Kahn, 'Coluccio Salutati,' 175, n. 22.

<sup>279</sup> Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, XI, 28; Kahn, 'Coluccio Salutati,' 161.

In the second place, Petrarch and Salutati appear to have applied their knowledge of St. Augustine to the classical contrast between the active and contemplative lives in a different manner. As we have seen, Petrarch had no hesitation in making use of Stoic and Epicurean tropes in the *De vita solitaria*, but transformed the contrast between two modes of living into an entirely un-classical contrast between two cognitive states. Eschewing the classical stress on physicality, location, and company, and apparently ignoring St. Augustine's more mature distinction between the active and contemplative lives, he replaced the *vita activa* with the life devoted to temporal concerns, and the *vita contemplativa* with the life devoted to the service of God in such a way that no substantive trace of the Stoic/Epicurean dilemma remained. The deciding factor was not a man's occupation or residence, but his application of reason and his level of self-knowledge. Although he peppered the *De vita solitaria* with quotations from authors such as Cicero, Seneca, Juvenal, and Ovid, Petrarch essentially read the ancient classics through the lens of early-Augustinian theology, and adapted classical tropes to a model of virtue based on the role accorded to reason in works such as the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*.

For Salutati, almost exactly the reverse is true. On the one hand, Salutati's use of Augustine's distinction between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* in the *De civitate Dei* allowed him to sustain the familiar classical dichotomy, and his endorsement of Augustine's later view of *voluntas* certainly helped him to adopt a more positive attitude towards certain schools of ancient thought. On the other hand, the *De nobilitate* and the letter to Zambeccari apply Augustinian theology not merely to Stoic philosophy, but also—and perhaps more thoroughly—to Aristotelian thought. In these texts, Salutati brings Augustine to bear on Aristotle in a manner which is not only alien to Petrarch's writings, but which is also much more critical of the saint than Petrarch would have allowed. As Kahn has argued, Salutati 'interprets Aristotle in terms of Augustine,' and 'criticizes Augustine with the help of Aristotle': indeed, 'he plays them off against each other so as to allow the *vita activa* to emerge with a new prominence.'<sup>280</sup> In affirming the superiority of the will in the *De nobilitate*, for example, Salutati uses Augustine to attack Aristotle's belief in the pre-eminence of the intellect,<sup>281</sup> but subsequently uses Aristotle's

<sup>280</sup> Kahn, 'Coluccio Salutati,' 154.

<sup>281</sup> Salutati, *De nobilitate*, 188.

understanding of the active life to challenge Augustine's belief that *sapientia* belonged to the intellect alone, and to blur the distinction between contemplation and action.<sup>282</sup>

Although both Salutati and Petrarch made use of St. Augustine in the works we have examined, it is clear not only that the quality of their Augustinianism was different, but also that their application of Augustinian concepts to their reading of classical literature was divergent, to say the least. And while it is necessary to take account of the various factors which may have influenced Salutati's engagement with the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*—his immediate rhetorical objectives and his rapport with contemporary scholastics being among the most obvious—it would nevertheless not be unjustified to suggest that their different attitudes towards St. Augustine in this regard point towards two different characters of 'humanism'.

(b) *Lorenzo Valla*

Valla, like so many humanists both before and after, was also deeply concerned with the problem of the relative merits of the active and contemplative lives. As with so much of his thought, however, his approach to this dilemma was highly original, and formed a part of his broader re-evaluation of classical ethics and his wide-ranging critique of Aristotelian philosophy. In offering a characteristically daring view of an age-old problem, Valla is often held to have differed significantly not only from ancient philosophers, but also from both his contemporaries and his humanistic antecedents. As Letizia Panizza has put it, Valla 'was seen . . . as taking on not only Aristotle but also Thomas Aquinas and related scholastic ethics as well; not only Seneca and Boethius but also distinguished earlier Italian humanists like Petrarch and Salutati, and older contemporaries like Leonardo Bruni Arentino.'<sup>283</sup> While such a view is certainly correct, it is the Augustinian character of Valla's originality that is of primary concern in this context. Although he may have disapproved of the saint's endorsement of certain aspects of Platonic thought, Valla's critique of the distinction between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* in works such as the *De voluptate* not only uses materials drawn from Augustine's theology, but also does so in a manner which highlights the roots of his divergence from Petrarch in particular.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 188–90.

<sup>283</sup> Panizza, 'Active and Contemplative in Lorenzo Valla,' 182.

While Petrarch transformed the classical opposition between two modes of living into a contrast between two forms of orientation using an early-Augustinian understanding of the intellect, Valla simply disposed with the idea of two separate lives altogether, and erected a notion of an ideal 'mixed' life on the shattered ruins of Stoic and Peripatetic thought. Conducting this radical act of intellectual demolition in the *De voluptate*, Valla pursues two complementary lines of argument.

The first element in Valla's attack is expressed through the character of Maffeo Vegio, and takes the form of an Epicurean invective against the praise of the *vita contemplativa*. Challenging the scholastic contention that there were two opposed modes of living, Vegio uses a quotation from Leonardo Bruni's translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to demonstrate that Aristotle had actually identified *three* forms of life—the life of pleasure, the civil or political life, and the contemplative life—and had suggested that each was pursued 'tum propter se ipsa . . . tum propter felicitatem'.<sup>284</sup> But if the scholastics were wrong to suggest that Aristotle had identified two—rather than three—modes of living, the Stagirite himself was wrong to suggest that any one of the three forms of life could be sought *both* for its own sake *and* for the sake of happiness. As Vegio explains, the suggestion that each mode of living could be pursued for the sake of two aims at the same time implied that happiness is something different from each.<sup>285</sup> If happiness (or beatitude) was the object of the three ways of life, but was nevertheless distinct from each and was not intrinsic to any one of them, it followed that happiness was nothing other than the three ways of life considered as a whole.<sup>286</sup> Similarly, if it were argued that each way of life was followed for its own sake in particular, and for the sake of happiness in general, one could assume that each way of life was a subset of *felicitas*; in which case, Vegio argued, the whole and not the parts should be sought.<sup>287</sup> And if this were granted, it was obvious that each way of life could not be followed for its own sake, but for the sake of happiness. Consequently, one of the key premises on which Aristotle had based his distinction between the contemplative, civil, and pleasurable lives was false.

<sup>284</sup> Valla, *De voluptate*, II, xxviii, 2; Keßler, *Lust*, 210: cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b, 1–4.

<sup>285</sup> Valla, *De voluptate*, II, xxviii, 3; Keßler, *Lust*, 210.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

Developing his critique of Aristotle further, Vegio then turns to the assertion that contemplation is a purely intellectual enterprise, and to the contention that its rewards are entirely spiritual in nature. For Vegio, such a claim was patently absurd. Although Aristotle had argued that there were two types of pleasure—one in the senses and another in the mind—it was apparent that, since the word *voluptas* was to describe each type of enjoyment, the two were identical, and pleasure was, as Epicurus had argued, felt both by the body and by the soul.<sup>288</sup> It was impossible to contend that one part of the soul was superior to the other, or that the body and soul were not united. Hence, it followed that the contemplative life could not be purely intellectual, and its enjoyment could not be entirely spiritual. Indeed, Vegio was able to go further. Since all types of enjoyment are identical, and since *voluptas* is the same as love and the good, it followed that contemplation aimed at pleasure, which was both intellectual and physical. Turning this on its head, it was apparent that the pursuit of *voluptas* involved an element of contemplation, and—taking Vegio's first point into account—it became clear that the pursuit of pleasure, rather than 'contemplation' was the best—indeed, the only—virtuous way of life.

The second element in Valla's critique of the *vita contemplativa* is voiced by the character of Antonio da Rho in the *De voluptate*. Although speaking as a defender of the Christian point of view, da Rho builds on some of the points raised by the Epicurean Vegio, and frames his attack on Stoic thought around an understanding of *caritas* that is closely tied to *amor*, and hence also to Christian *voluptas*, which is the true good and beatitude.<sup>289</sup> Since *caritas* is central to the life of the Christian, da Rho argues that the Stoic conception of the *vita contemplativa* and solitude 'are profoundly un-Christian'.<sup>290</sup> On the one hand, *caritas* imbues the Christian with a profound love for others, in good times and in bad; and on the other hand, the *vita caritatis* is a fundamentally social means of reaching *beatitudo*. Although contemplation was therefore not to be scorned, it was not to be indulged to the exclusion of all else, and formed part of a 'mixed' life directed towards pleasure.

Although one cannot help but remark on the divergence of their conclusions, however, it is Valla's argumentation which is of greatest use in

<sup>288</sup> Valla, *De voluptate*, II, xxviii, 5; Keßler, *Lust*, 212.

<sup>289</sup> E.g. Valla, *De voluptate*, III, ix, 3–x, 2; III, xiii, 2; Keßler, *Lust*, 304–6, 314.

<sup>290</sup> Panizza, 'Active and Contemplative in Lorenzo Valla,' 202.

highlighting the distance which separated his intellectual outlook from Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*, and the intellectual foundations of the *De voluptate* are of particular relevance in this regard. Three points deserve to be noted.

First, the premises of Valla's argument are unfamiliar to Petrarch's thought. In opposing the *vita contemplativa* through the characters of Maffeo Vegio and Antonio da Rho, Valla appealed principally to *voluptas* (that is to say, *felicitas* or *beatitudo*), and adamantly denied that that the life which was appropriate to a Christian could be pursued through the intellect alone. While it hardly needs saying that this emphasis on *voluptas*—even in a Christianised form—would have horrified Petrarch, it is the nature of Valla's understanding of pleasure which is of primary interest. As we have observed in a previous chapter, Valla's understanding of *voluptas* was grounded in a view of *voluntas* which placed the will at the centre of man's moral condition. Although his willingness to subvert the familiar contrast between the active and contemplative lives bears some superficial similarity with Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*, Valla's approach to the subject is therefore founded on a conception of human virtue that was utterly alien to Petrarch's view of solitude.

Second, if not entirely unfamiliar to Petrarch in essence, the intended target of Valla's attack on the *vita contemplativa* and his mode of argumentation lack any parallel in the *De vita solitaria*. Unlike Petrarch's treatise, which is not obviously aimed at any particular intellectual adversary, Valla directed his invective principally against Aristotle (in the case of Maffeo Vegio) and the Stoics (in the case of Antonio da Rho), and of these two perceived opponents, it is perhaps Aristotle who receives the most thorough attention. Both Vegio and da Rho structure their argument around a detailed deconstruction of the terms in which particular viewpoints and/or texts are cast, and a considerable amount of attention is devoted to linguistic analysis (as in the case of Vegio's discussion of the uses of *voluptas*). Petrarch's argumentation, by contrast, is less dependent on disagreement with other texts for its structure, and where disagreement occurs, it is either masked by a disregard for the original context (as in the case of Seneca's 'inconsistency'), or restricted to a single specific point taken at face-value (as in the case of Quintilian).

Third, although both Valla and Petrarch appear to subvert the familiar contrast between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, they do so on the basis of different attitudes towards different texts and propose structurally different alternatives. Whereas Petrarch had taken a trope drawn principally from the Stoicism and Epicureanism found in the Latin classics

and transformed it into a Christian contrast based on intellection, Valla attacked both the view of the different forms of life held by both the scholastics and by Aristotle, and inveighed directly against the Stoic notion of the *tranquillitas animi*, before advocating a 'mixed' form of life in which the intellect was ancillary to will in the pursuit of pleasure. Whereas Petrarch transforms a classical trope, and makes use of the linguistic flexibility that such a transformation allows, Valla seeks to destroy scholastic, Aristotelian, and Stoic ideas of the *vita contemplativa*, and replaces it with a third, more comprehensive conception of existence.

Although the divergence of their positions and their modes of argumentation could hardly be underestimated, it is nevertheless striking that both Petrarch and Valla made extensive use of St. Augustine's theology. Throughout the third book of the *De voluptate*, Antonio da Rho explains the value of the social implications of *caritas* with the support of frequent appeals to St. Paul and St. Augustine, and substantial parts of Valla's argument—both through da Rho and Vegio—seem to contain subtle, but significant echoes of Augustinian thought. As Letizia Panizza has demonstrated,<sup>291</sup> Valla's attack on the *vita contemplativa* and invective against scholastic views of contemplation appear to have been shaped by a reading of Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, and seem to have been partially designed to correct St. Thomas Aquinas' misreading of a crucial passage in the same work.

But while both Petrarch and Valla made use of St. Augustine's theology, it would be mistaken to believe that they did so in a comparable manner, and it is possible to argue that each of the three differences we have observed between the *De vita solitaria* and the *De voluptate* are intimately (although not exclusively) related to their respective approaches to Augustinian thought.

In the first place, the fact that Valla's argument rests so heavily on his conception of *voluptas* and *voluntas* points to an identifiable debt to St. Augustine's theology. But while Petrarch derived his understanding of solitude from the conception of the intellect which he found in St. Augustine's early, introspective works, Valla's critique of the *vita contemplativa* is linked with the voluntarism which he recovered from the saint's anti-Manichean dialogues and mature treatises. As we have observed in a previous chapter, despite the characteristically forceful—and even shocking—manner in which Valla expressed his views of

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<sup>291</sup> Ibid., *passim*.



*voluptas* and *voluntas*, the provocative veneer conceals an attachment to the pre-eminence of the will and a valid interpretation of elements of St. Augustine's thought. Thus, at a foundational level, Petrarch and Valla each looked to different aspects of Augustinian theology.

In the second place, both Petrarch and Valla attempted to re-evaluate the distinction between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* with reference to Augustine's writings, but turned to different texts in doing so. Whereas Petrarch transformed the classical dichotomy into an intellectual distinction on the basis of works including the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*, Valla—like Salutati—relied principally on a key passage in the *De civitate Dei* in offering his vision of a 'mixed' life. In this passage—which Salutati had also used, although in a less thorough manner—Augustine argued that a Christian could follow any of 'the life of leisure, the life of action, and the combination of both' and 'still attain to everlasting rewards, provided that he [did] so without prejudice to his faith.'<sup>292</sup> In contrast to St. Thomas Aquinas' reading in the *Summa Theologiae*,<sup>293</sup> Valla identified the 'combined' life as distinct from the (inferior) lives of leisure and activity, and contended that Augustine had intended that this third mode of existence was to be preferred. If Petrarch was aware of this passage (and there is no reason to suppose that he was not), he chose to avoid exploring this dimension of Augustine's thought in his treatment of solitude.

In the third place, Valla and Petrarch not only construed Augustine's theology differently, but also applied their knowledge of the saint's thought to classical literature and philosophy in different ways. In contrast to Petrarch's tendency to read ancient philosophy through an Augustinian lens, and to imbue Stoic and Epicurean tropes with meaning taken from St. Augustine's early theology, Valla applied particular aspects of Augustine's thought critically to Aristotelian, Stoic, and scholastic thought, but was yet prepared to adapt Augustinian precepts to often surprising elements of classical philosophy, including Epicureanism. Like Salutati's treatment of the *vita activa*, Valla paid heed to apparent points of divergence between Aristotle and Augustine; but unlike Salutati, he was comparatively reluctant to interpret the one in terms of the other. Thus, while Valla's application of St. Augustine's theology to classical literature and

<sup>292</sup> Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, XIX, 19; trans. Dyson, 948.

<sup>293</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, q. 182, a. 2; Panizza, 'Active and Contemplative in Lorenzo Valla,' 184–5.

philosophy in the context of his attack on the *vita contemplativa* in the *De voluptate* suggests that his 'humanism' was of a different quality to that found in Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*, it would not be unjust to suggest that his 'humanism' was also at some remove from that of Salutati's writings on the *vita activa*.

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Despite the tendency of many scholars to present the *De vita solitaria* as a work which bears the hallmarks of Stoic and Epicurean thought, and which foreshadows a number of later humanistic writings, this chapter has demonstrated that Petrarch's treatise may be seen in a quite different light.

On the one hand, it is evident that the *De vita solitaria* displays a more profound attachment to St. Augustine's theology than has previously been supposed. Offering an interpretation of solitude which has much in common with the *otium* described in the *De otio religioso*, Petrarch's treatise presents the *vita solitaria* as an interior state based on the orientation of the self towards God through the application of reason, and draws significantly on St. Augustine's treatment of the intellect in works including the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*. Although he makes extensive use of imagery drawn from classical literature, it is evident that Petrarch reconfigured the Stoic/Epicurean distinction between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* in such a way that barely a trace of the original dichotomy remained. As we have seen in relation to the *De otio religioso* and the *Secretum*, Petrarch's use of St. Augustine's theology in the *De vita solitaria* suggests that he was willing to read classical philosophy through an Augustinian lens, and that the contours of his humanism were shaped by his attachment to elements of the saint's thought.

On the other hand, the Augustinian character of solitude in Petrarch's treatise allows us to re-evaluate the relationship of the *De vita solitaria* to later humanistic thought. Quite apart from the fact that they offered radically different conclusions, Coluccio Salutati and Lorenzo Valla not only employed different strategies of argument in their works, but also made use of St. Augustine's theology in a manner which stands at some distance from the Augustinianism of the *De vita solitaria*. Looking to Augustine's conception of the will in his anti-Manichean dialogues and more mature works rather than to those writings which place greater emphasis on the intellect, Salutati and Valla each attacked a life of contemplation or speculation on the basis of Augustinian arguments which were foreign to Petrarch. So, too, Salutati's advocacy of the *vita activa*,

and Valla's recommendation of a 'mixed' life devoted to pleasure relied on applying a passage in the *De civitate Dei* which Petrarch appeared to overlook. Similarly, and perhaps more importantly, Salutati and Valla each applied St. Augustine to classical philosophy in a manner quite alien to the *De vita solitaria*. Employing Augustine's theology in the context of a discourse with Aristotelianism and scholasticism, Salutati was willing to adapt Augustinian and Peripatetic thought to each other, and Valla bent certain of the saint's precepts to purposes shaped by his critique of Aristotle. If Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*, Salutati's defence of the *vita activa*, and Valla's critique of the *vita contemplativa* in the *De voluptate* can all be said to have been humanistic, therefore, it appears evident that the interplay between Augustinian and classical elements in their respective works was of a different nature, and the texture of their humanism itself was of a different character.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE HOLY PASSION OF FRIENDSHIP

#### 1. *Petrarch and Friendship*

Friendship was extremely important to Petrarch, and he valued his friends very highly. From his youth, he was continually finding new friends and building relationships which were as pleasurable as they were enduring. He was not loath to reveal his strength of feeling on the subject. Writing to Giovanni d'Incisa, a Florentine relative, on 10 April 1348, he described friendship as being 'much rarer and more precious than gold'.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in a letter to the grammarian Zanobi da Strada,<sup>2</sup> written some four years later, he explained his attempt to reconcile a quarrel between Niccolò Acciaiuoli and Giovanni Barrili<sup>3</sup> by asking rhetorically whether there was anything among men which was greater than friendship except virtue itself.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, a few months earlier, he had advised the same Niccolò that even a man as mighty and exalted as a king should hold nothing barring God and virtue as dear as friendship.<sup>5</sup>

Petrarch's friendships have been the subject of great scholarly interest, and his attachment to his friends has frequently been noted. In the portrait with which he concluded his biography of Petrarch, for example, E. H. Wilkins asserted that:

Never did any man form and cultivate a richer store of friendships; never did any man draw deeper devotion from his friends, or maintain a deeper devotion to them... Nothing short of proven unworthiness could lead to a withdrawal of friendship—not the blows of a cruel fortune, not even the rare wounds given him in friendly faithfulness, not even the rare necessity faithfully to wound his friends. He rejoiced when actual companionship with friends was possible; but through the powers of his memory and

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<sup>1</sup> *Fam.* VII, 11, 4: 'Multo rarior multoque preciosior res est amicitia quam aurum...'

<sup>2</sup> On Petrarch's friendship with Zanobi da Strada, see, for example, P. Guidotti, 'Un amico del Petrarca e del Boccaccio: Zanobi da Strada, poeta laureato,' *Archivio storico italiano* 13 (1930): 249–93.

<sup>3</sup> Q.v. *Fam.* XII, 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Fam.* XII, 17, 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Fam.* XII, 2, 15.

his imagination he felt them present even in absence, even if they had never met.<sup>6</sup>

Few have matched Wilkins' eloquence, but he is nevertheless reflective of historical opinion. Aldo Scaglione, to take another example, is both accurate and typical in having described Petrarch as 'an ideal friend, ever ready to help and to do so graciously,'<sup>7</sup> while Bosco similarly encapsulates the impression conveyed by Petrarch's correspondence in concluding that he was a person for whom hatred was alien.<sup>8</sup>

If the importance of friendship in Petrarch's life has been well appreciated, however, Petrarch's conception of friendship has received only very little scholarly attention. Although there are many illuminating studies of his relationship with individual figures or groups,<sup>9</sup> his understanding of the term 'amicitia' seems to have aroused almost no interest within the field.<sup>10</sup> Even major texts on the concept of friendship in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance grant Petrarch no more than a fleeting reference. Reginald Hyatte, for example, refers to Petrarch on only two inconsequential occasions,<sup>11</sup> and he merits no serious examination in E. D. H. Carmichael's recent important study.<sup>12</sup> Besides a brief paper

<sup>6</sup> Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 252.

<sup>7</sup> A. Scaglione, 'Petrarca 1974: A Sketch for a Portrait,' in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later*, ed. Scaglione, 1–24, here 19.

<sup>8</sup> Bosco, *Petrarca*, 181.

<sup>9</sup> The bibliography for Petrarch's friends and friendships is vast, but see, for example, U. Berlière, *Un ami de Pétrarque, Louis Sanctus de Beeringen* (Rome, 1905); H. Cochin, *Un amico del Petrarca: lettere del Nelli al Petrarca*, trans. Le Monnier (Florence, 1901); C. Felisari, 'Un amico del Petrarca: Paganino da Bizzozzero,' *Studi petrarcheschi* n.s. 1 (1984): 205–51; P. G. Pisoni, 'Guglielmo Maramaldo commentatore di Dante e amico del Petrarca,' *Studi petrarcheschi* n.s., 1 (1984): 253–58; Guidotti, 'Un amico del Petrarca e del Boccaccio: Zanobi da Strada'; L. Lazzanni, 'Amici del Petrarca a Venezia e Treviso,' *Archivio Veneto* 14 (1933): 3–16; A. Pertusi, *Leonzio Pilato tra Petrarca e Boccaccio* (Venice and Rome, 1964); M. Vattasso, *Del Petrarca e d'alcuni suoi amici* (Rome, 1904); E. H. Wilkins, 'Petrarch and Giacomo de' Rossi,' *Speculum* 25 (1950): 347–78; G. Zaccagnini, 'Guido Sette amico del Petrarca,' in *Parma a Francesco Petrarca* (Parma, 1934), 237–42.

<sup>10</sup> Petrarch's library, indeed, appears to have attracted more attention than his reading of and reaction to specific texts. See, for example, J. Leclercq, 'L'Amitié dans les lettres au Moyen Age: autour d'un manuscrit de la bibliothèque de Petrarque,' *Revue du Moyen Age Latin* 1 (1945): 391–410. It is remarkable that Trinkaus devotes an entire chapter to discussing Petrarch's 'Critique of Self and Society', but almost completely neglects to consider the concept of friendship. Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 52–89.

<sup>11</sup> R. Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship. The Idealization of Friendship in Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature* (Leiden, 1994), 1–2, 142.

<sup>12</sup> E. D. H. Carmichael, *Friendship. Interpreting Christian Love* (London and New York, 2004).

published by Gabriel Maugain in 1928,<sup>13</sup> the only significant attempt to engage with Petrarch's notion of *amicitia* amongst modern scholars is Claude Lafleur's 2001 study.<sup>14</sup>

It cannot be denied that the evidence reveals that Petrarch's friendships had a very practical and pragmatic dimension. There are many instances of Petrarch intervening on behalf of a friend, representing another's interests, or offering advice on particular problems. Using his own influence to good effect, he was, for example, only too willing to ask Emperor Charles IV to show favour to Lello di Pietro Stefano dei Tosetti, whom Petrarch tellingly called 'Laelius'.<sup>15</sup> His relationship with Laelius is, indeed, indicative of the depth of his attachment to his friends. Petrarch first met Laelius and Ludwig van Kempen ('Socrates') on a visit to Giacomo Colonna, bishop of Lombez, in 1330.<sup>16</sup> The three were fast friends and, although there appear to have been some squabbles over the years,<sup>17</sup> their nicknames are a testament to the esteem in which Petrarch held their amity,<sup>18</sup> and the bond between Laelius and Socrates is commemorated in the *Triumphus cupidinis* as a tantalising example of *l'amore perfetto*.<sup>19</sup> They were, indeed, so dear to him that Petrarch not merely dedicated the *Familiars* to Socrates,<sup>20</sup> but even considered establishing a quasi-monastic community at Montrieux in late 1347.<sup>21</sup> There are, moreover, cases of Petrarch creating a textual community which allowed him to enjoy certain reciprocal benefits from his friends. This is perhaps most evident

<sup>13</sup> G. Maugain, 'Pétrarque et l'art de l'amitié,' *Mélanges de littérature et d'histoire* (1928): 49–69.

<sup>14</sup> C. Lafleur, *Pétrarque et l'amitié. Doctrine et pratique de l'amitié chez Pétrarque à partir de ses textes latins* (Paris and Quebec, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> *Fam.* XIX, 4; 'Laelius' was a reference to Gaius Laelius, regarded by Cicero and others as the epitome of the loyal friend for his relationship with Scipio Africanus during the Second Punic War. Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 31–4, 37, 171, 196, 210–11.

<sup>16</sup> Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> Q.v. *Fam.* XX, 13; XX, 14; XX, 15.

<sup>18</sup> 'Socrates' carries with it a sense of wisdom, obviously, but also reflects the degree to which the Socratic dialogues provided an important source (direct and indirect) on friendship for medieval and Renaissance authors. Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 10–16; S. Bowd, 'Swarming with Hermits: Religious Friendship in Renaissance Italy, 1490–1540' in *Forms of Faith in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, ed. A. Brundin and M. Treharne (Ashgate, 2009), 9–31.

<sup>19</sup> *Triumphus cupidinis*, IV, 67–78.

<sup>20</sup> *Fam.* I, 1, 11.

<sup>21</sup> E. H. Wilkins, 'Petrarch's Ecclesiastical Career,' *Speculum* 28/4 (Oct. 1953): 754–75, here 762–3; Berlière, *Un ami de Pétrarque*, 14–15, 40–1. Petrarch petitioned the pope to allow Socrates to join this community, but there was no mention—and no need to mention—Laelius. How he fitted into this arrangement, if at all, is unclear. The proposed community never materialised, primarily because of Petrarch's decision to return to Italy in November 1347, for which see *Ecl.* VIII.



in his friendship with Giovanni Boccaccio, from whom he received an unexpected metrical epistle in 1350.<sup>22</sup> Although Petrarch was apparently rather slovenly in replying, Boccaccio's bold statement of respect was the beginning of a rich and rewarding literary friendship which was marked by openness and liberality. Among the countless gifts which the two exchanged in later years, Boccaccio sent Petrarch Leontius Pilatus' Latin translation of Homer's *Iliad*,<sup>23</sup> and in turn, Petrarch—who was not easy to impress—showed his admiration for the younger man's talent in translating the story of Griselda from Boccaccio's *Decameron* into Latin.<sup>24</sup>

But just as Richard Trexler has demonstrated that the operative and reciprocal aspects of the later friendship between Lapo Mazzei and Francesco di Marco Datini rested on an underlying conception of an idealised friendship and a web of self-perceptions, so in Petrarch's friendships, the real interpenetrates with the ideal.<sup>25</sup> As Kenneth Gouwens has observed, Petrarch

took on the role of "moral therapist" for whom "[l]anguage itself could be used in such a way as to become affectively therapeutic. He sought knowledge of himself and the world in a dialogic context, in which conversations (whether real or imagined) facilitated his own personal growth... [I]ntrospection and the interpersonal... thus complement each other... Viewed in [this light], the symbiosis of humanist moral enquiry and the social world of the sodalities becomes manifest."<sup>26</sup>

Friendship for Petrarch was not merely a fact of life, but an intrinsic part of his *Lebensweisheit*, a component in the practical philosophy of living, and was intimately connected with his moral sentiments. His thoughts on

<sup>22</sup> Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 93.

<sup>23</sup> For the relationship between Petrarch, Boccaccio and Leontius Pilatus, see *Sen.* VI, 1. See also Pertusi, *Leonzio Pilato*.

<sup>24</sup> *Sen.* XVII, 3; Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 142. For Petrarch's translation of the tale of Griselda, see, for example, V. Branca, 'Per il testo del "Decameron". La prima diffusione del "Decameron",' *Studi di filologia italiana* 8 (1950): 54–61; idem, 'Sulla diffusione della "Griselda" petrarchesca,' *Studi petrarcheschi* 6 (1956): 221–24; idem, *Boccaccio medievale* (Florence, 1986), 388–94; G. Albanese, 'La "Griselda",' in *Codici latini del Petrarca nelle biblioteche fiorentine. Mostra 19 Maggio–30 Giugno 1991*, ed. M. Feo (Florence, 1991), 432–5; idem, 'Fortuna Umanistica della *Griselda*,' *Quaderni petrarcheschi* 9–10 (1992–3): 571–628; M. Hernández Esteta, 'Lecturas del relato de Griselda: "Decameron" X, 10 y "Seniles", 10, 3,' *Rivista di letteratura italiana* 9 (1991): 373–99.

<sup>25</sup> R. C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca and London, 1991), 131–58.

<sup>26</sup> K. Gouwens, 'Perceiving the Past: Renaissance Humanism after the "Cognitive Turn",' *American Historical Review* 103/1 (Feb. 1998): 55–82, here 76–7, quoting C. Trinkaus, 'Italian Humanism and Scholastic Theology,' in *Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Rabil, 3: 327–48 at 330.

the subject are not, it is true, collected in a single text. There is nothing comparable to the *De otio religioso* or the *De vita solitaria* to be found for friendship. His writings—especially the *Familiares* and the *Seniles*—are, however, littered with sentiments which point to an active and conscious engagement with a rich literary tradition, and are peppered with remarks which indicate a deliberate effort to make friendship an integral part of a practical moral philosophy. In the *Familiares*, for example, where classical and patristic texts provide a constant point of reference, Petrarch was preoccupied with the question of how to distinguish between true and false friends—itself bound up with the nature of true love<sup>27</sup>—and seldom tired of pointing out the connection between friendship and virtue.<sup>28</sup> The question of friendship, indeed, is the subject of seven chapters in the two books of the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, and receives some of the most detailed and philosophically challenging analysis in the entire text.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, we have already seen that the *De vita solitaria* makes frequent reference to friendship. Although Petrarch conceived of solitude as a *solitudo animi*, the practice of living as a *solitarius* was evidently very closely bound up with the active exercise of friendship. Petrarch's prefatory letter to Philippe de Cabassoles indicates that it was both pleasurable and helpful to have a friend for company. The cause and dedication of the book, together with the implication of its opening remarks reveals that—in a way which must be explored more closely—a friend could help kindle the divine fire of a man's soul and, by extension, also bask in its warmth.

In attempting to place the concept of friendship in a moral, as much as a practical context, Petrarch actively participated in a long intellectual tradition, and was familiar with a range of the most important texts on the subject, stretching from Aristotle,<sup>30</sup> Cicero, and Seneca,<sup>31</sup> to Ambrose,<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> For which see M. Feo, 'L'amore perfetto,' in *Petrarca e Agostino*, ed. Cardini and Coppini, 109–130.

<sup>28</sup> E.g. *Fam.* XVIII, 8, 4: 'Virtus est amicitie fundamentum . . .'

<sup>29</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 49–52; II, 27, 52–53.

<sup>30</sup> E.g. *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 50; referring to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 3, 1156a–b; 5–7, 1157b–1159a; *De remediis utriusque fortune*, II, 31; referring to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX, 9, 1169b18. There are also numerous possible references to the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics* in *De remediis utriusque fortune*, II, pref.

<sup>31</sup> For a list of references to Cicero and Seneca (as well as to other sources) in Petrarch's writings on friendship, see Lafleur, *Pétrarque et l'amitié*, 11–32, esp. 13–6, 23–4.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Petrarch's indication of his knowledge of Ambrose's *De officiis ministrorum* at *De vita solitaria*, II, ix, 5; *Prose*, 552. For his understanding of other texts, including apocrypha, see, for example, *Prose*, 476 n. 1, 490, n. 4, 512, n. 2.

Augustine,<sup>33</sup> and Bernard of Clairvaux.<sup>34</sup> Unwilling to see Petrarch's understanding of *amicitia* as having significant relevance for his broader moral philosophy, Lafleur has contended that his literary treatment of the theme is essentially aphoristic. Drawing from this rich literary heritage, Lafleur suggests that Petrarch avoided the temptations of rigor and systematisation and offered instead a series of axioms relating to particular aspects of friendship.<sup>35</sup> The fact that Petrarch cited Cicero and Seneca more than any other authorities, however, seems in Lafleur's eyes to demonstrate that these authors exercised a decisive influence on his conception of *amicitia*, even though he rejected the Stoics' dogmatic attachment to virtue.<sup>36</sup> Of the two, Cicero was of primary significance, and the general tone of Petrarch's writings on friendship is, for Lafleur, essentially Ciceronian.<sup>37</sup> There is little trace of specifically Christian sensibilities, and—although Lafleur is at a loss to explain the omission—St. Augustine is held to have exerted no discernable influence on the shape of Petrarch's thought.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Lafleur notes that Petrarch quotes directly from St. Augustine's works on only one occasion in his discussions of friendship, and even then in an 'ornamental' manner which has little bearing on the nature of *amicitia*.<sup>39</sup>

## 2. Virtus est Amicitie Fundamentum: *the Ciceronian Dimension*

It must be granted that there is much to recommend the suggestion that Petrarch's writings on friendship had a primarily Ciceronian flavour. At a merely bibliographical level, it is necessary to acknowledge that Cicero's *De amicitia* was a natural point of reference for Petrarch. Although other Latin authors, such as Seneca and Valerius Maximus, must also be recognised, Cicero's dialogue—in which Gaius Laelius discusses his friendship

<sup>33</sup> Note Petrarch's interesting citation of Augustine's friendship with Ambrose in relation to his own attitude towards his friends, *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, I, 13; quoting Augustine, *Conf.* V, xii, 23.

<sup>34</sup> In the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Carraud has found thirty two direct references to eleven of St. Bernard's works, in addition to sixteen references to three pseudo-Bernardian texts. A close knowledge of St. Bernard's life and works is observable at *Contra eum qui maledixit Italie*, 46–9, 52, 54, 68–9, 75, 114. For a brief discussion of Petrarch's knowledge of and attitude towards St. Bernard, see A. M. Voci, *Petrarca e la vita religiosa: il mito umanista della vita eremitica* (Rome, 1983), 61–5.

<sup>35</sup> Lafleur, *Pétrarque et l'amitié*, 37.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 37, 41–7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 49–50.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 12; Petrarch quotes from Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, xv, 27 at *Fam.* III, 15, 1.

with the recently departed Scipio—was, as Hyatte observes, ‘one of the most widely read classical works on *amicitia perfecta* along with Latin versions of the *Nicomachean Ethics* after the twelfth century,’ and represents possibly the most thorough theoretical exploration of friendship known to Petrarch.<sup>40</sup> As the lists of his favourite books demonstrate, he knew the work possibly as early as 1333, and perhaps indicates his appreciation of the text by listing it fourth among Cicero’s works on the first list (after the *De re publica*, the *Tusculan Disputations* and the *De officiis*) and third on the second list (again after the *Tusculan Disputations* and the *De re publica*, but before the *De officiis*).<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Petrarch openly expressed the esteem in which he held Cicero with particular reference to the dialogue in letters to King Robert of Naples on 26 December 1338 and to Jacopo da Firenze on 1 April 1352.<sup>42</sup>

The impression given by Petrarch’s reading is borne out by the many direct citations of the *De amicitia* and numerous instances of conceptual similarity in Petrarch’s writings. Much of the treatment of friendship, especially in the *Familiars* and the *Seniles*, appears to bear the hallmarks of Cicero’s understanding of *amicitia*. Drawing significantly on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*,<sup>43</sup> Cicero had argued that friendship should be valued above all other human things not merely because it is suited to our nature, but also because it is a unique form of relationship that is capable of adjusting itself to all circumstances.<sup>44</sup> While human beings are naturally drawn to society, the bond which unites only a few is strongest, since it involves both *caritas* and *benevolentia* in the highest degree. ‘For friendship,’ Cicero claims, ‘is nothing other than an agreement in all things human and divine, with *benevolentia* and *caritas*.’<sup>45</sup> This bond of friendship, in which *benevolentia* and *caritas* played such an important role, could not be based on any form of utility—since such an interest

<sup>40</sup> Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 26.

<sup>41</sup> Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 117–137.

<sup>42</sup> *Fam.* IV, 3, 7; XII, 8, 8.

<sup>43</sup> Theophrastus and Panaetius of Rhodes have also been suggested as influences on the work, although both are subject to some doubt.

<sup>44</sup> For much of this paragraph, I follow Carmichael, *Friendship*, 26–28 and Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 26–33. What follows is far from a complete account of Cicero’s conception of friendship, but only those elements which are pertinent to the examination of Petrarch have been included. Cicero, *De amicitia*, VI, 22; cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 1–3, 1155a–1156b.

<sup>45</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia*, VI, 20: ‘Est enim amicitia nihil aliud nisi omnium divinarum humanarumque rerum cum benevolentia et caritate consensio.’ Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX, 4–6, 1166a–1167b.

would risk taking priority over the friendship itself<sup>46</sup>—but only on the love of virtue.<sup>47</sup> Human beings are drawn to a person whose character is like their own, because in him we see a lamp of virtue<sup>48</sup> and because there is nothing more attractive than virtue, nothing which induces us to affection more.<sup>49</sup> For Seneca as much as for Cicero and Aristotle, love for a friend is its own reward,<sup>50</sup> and it is perfectly possible to love as a friend even someone that we have never met.<sup>51</sup>

The repudiation of utility and the primacy of *caritas* led Cicero—following in Aristotle's wake<sup>52</sup>—to suggest that loving a friend was akin to loving oneself. 'We naturally love ourselves, simply because we are dear (*carus*) to ourselves, not because we expect to gain from that love (*cari-tas*). We shall never find a true friend unless we transfer the same attitude to friendship, for a true friend 'is, as it were, another self.'<sup>53</sup> Having stated that a person sees in a friend a likeness of himself and the lamp of virtue, he loves that friend in the same way as he loves himself and the virtue he possesses. Since one learns self-love by clinging to virtue and rejecting all vice, one learns to love friends by searching for the same attributes in another.<sup>54</sup>

Differences of social class had no place in a friendship based on a mutual love of virtue. Granting that the friend is an *alter idem*, parity must always be observed. Cicero's Laelius holds Scipio up as an example of this attitude and expresses the view that all people should imitate his capacity to lift up his social inferiors in friendship.<sup>55</sup> If in friendship no differences can be observed, and two people are united in love, then, if loyalty (*fides*) is to be nurtured, it logically follows that nothing can be held back. There is no room for secrecy or dissembling. In friendship, Cicero argues, the obligation to love and be loved implies that it is necessary both to show and to see an open heart.<sup>56</sup> This, indeed, was a view to which Seneca was also attached. Although it was wise always to choose a friend with care,

<sup>46</sup> Cicero, *De finibus*, III, xxi, 70; *De officiis*, III, x, 43. Cf. Cicero, *De amicitia*, VIII, 28.

<sup>47</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia*, IX, 30–1.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., VIII, 27.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., VIII, 28.

<sup>50</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* ix, 10–11; cf. Cicero, *De amicitia*, IX, 31; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 8, 1159a.

<sup>51</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia*, VIII, 28.

<sup>52</sup> Q.v. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX, 8, 1168a–1169b.

<sup>53</sup> Carmichael, *Friendship*, 31, quoting Cicero, *De amicitia*, XXI, 80.

<sup>54</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia*, XXI, 79; XXII, 82. Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* vi, 7.

<sup>55</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia*, XIX, 69–XX, 71. Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* ix, 18; xlvii, 16.

<sup>56</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia*, XXVI, 97.

and to be slow in embarking upon a friendship, *fides*—which was the basis for the endurance of a friendship—could only be ensured if trust and openness were exercised for the sake of the love of virtue.<sup>57</sup>

True friends were admittedly rare,<sup>58</sup> but where two people were united by *amicitia*, the bond was immortal. At the very beginning of the *De amicitia*, Cicero's Laelius tells his companions that he is happy despite Scipio's death, because he had spent his life with a friend with whom he shared everything, and with whom he enjoyed such great pleasure in pursuits, in public actions and in opinions.<sup>59</sup> The friendship which he had treasured in life stayed with him still. Had it been based on need, it would certainly have dissolved, but because it was founded on virtue alone, Laelius' friendship with Scipio could not die.<sup>60</sup>

As in Cicero's dialogue, virtue is the foundation of friendship in Petrarch's description of the relationship between Scipio and Laelius in the *Africa*. Just as Publius Cornelius recommends Laelius to his son because of the active virtue and lofty spirit that make him the peer of any senator, Laelius himself praises Scipio to Syphax in similar terms. Scipio, Laelius proclaims, has no regard for worldly riches, spurns earthly pleasures<sup>61</sup> and scorns the hollow praise of the vulgar mob, treasuring only 'true glory' and dear friends.<sup>62</sup> These qualities, rather than his 'ethereal aura', 'tranquil majesty', 'luxuriant locks', and towering stature, recommend him most as a friend.<sup>63</sup> Writing to Niccolò da Lucca in 1351, Petrarch justified his letters by quoting 'that commonly known and splendid opinion of Cicero's: "There is nothing more lovable than virtue, and nothing that attracts us

<sup>57</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* iii, 2–3.

<sup>58</sup> Aristotle went so far as to argue that it was impossible to be a true friend to many people at the same time, thus demonstrating that true friendships *had* to be rare by definition. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 6, 1158a, cf. VIII, 4, 1156b; IX, 10, 1170b–1171a.

<sup>59</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia*, IV, 15.

<sup>60</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia*, IX, 32.

<sup>61</sup> Although it is not explicitly related to friendship (in the *Africa*, at least), Petrarch has Scipio indicate his contempt for earthly pleasures in a later passage. Rebuking Massinissa for bigamously marrying Sophonisba, the wife of the captive Syphax (who had by this point broken his alliance with Rome to assist Hannibal, and been defeated), Scipio modestly affirms that no virtue makes him more proud than his ability to keep a tight hold on the reins of pleasure, before delivering a searing attack on the effects of the evil of carnal desires. *Africa*, V, 370ff. The gentleness of the rebuke is in itself worthy of note: cf. *Sen.* II, 1, 73.

<sup>62</sup> *Africa*, IV, 86–9: 'Rebus in ambiguis, rebus tranquilla secundis  
spernit opes, populi ventosos spernit honores,  
gloria vera placet, dulces conquirat amicos:  
he sibi divitiae sunt...'

<sup>63</sup> *Africa*, IV, 46–59.

more.”<sup>64</sup> Similarly, in a long letter to Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara written on 28 November 1373 (*Sen.* XIV, 1), he stated that he agreed with ‘pagan philosophers’ that there could be no friendship without wisdom and virtue.<sup>65</sup> Adding a more personal note, Petrarch claimed in a letter to the Neapolitan knight Guglielmo Maramaldo that his friendship with the musician Floriano da Rimini was founded on virtue, although the same could unfortunately not be said of Floriano’s son, referred to only as ‘Orpheus’.<sup>66</sup>

In suggesting that virtue was the foundation of friendship, Petrarch followed Cicero in simultaneously expressing a suspicion for utility. Friendship had no reference to need, although it was possible for friends to help one another from love. Mirroring the *De amicitia* in the *Africa*, Petrarch’s Laelius and Scipio had no need of each other, finding in their friendship all the reward they needed, although—as the *De viris illustribus* illustrates—they aided each other greatly.<sup>67</sup> Extending this further, Petrarch contended that utility was even antithetical to friendship. In the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Gaudium is rebuked by Ratio for displaying pride in an abundance of friends. ‘Doomed are those friendships,’ Ratio declares,

of which pleasure or utility is the foundation! for they tremble while they are standing and come to ruination when they fall: it is not so much possible, as very easy—rather almost necessary, indeed—for the most part of these to follow Fortune, or age and beauty, than which nothing is more uncertain.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> *Fam.* IX, 11, 2: ‘Michi autem cogitanti quibus artibus familiaris epystola de nichilo texeretur, mirantique quid michi tecum rei esset ac scribendi causas et materiam requirenti, nichil in animum prius venit quam vulgata illa Ciceronis ac preclara sententia: “Virtute nichil amabilius nichilque quod magis alliciat,” tantumque eius esse vim ut eos sepe, quos nunquam vidimus, diligamus.’ quoting Cicero, *De amicitia*, VIII, 28; cf. *Sen.* VI, 3, 4, referring to Cicero, *De amicitia*, VI, 20.

<sup>65</sup> *Sen.* XIV, 1, 30: ‘Neque vero ipsi gentium philosophi opinati sunt posse veram amicitiam sine vera sapientia ac virtute consistere...’

<sup>66</sup> *Sen.* XI, 5.

<sup>67</sup> *De viris illustribus*, XI, 7–8, referring to Cicero, *De amicitia*; Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, XXVII, xvii, 8; text from the edition by Martellotti in *Prose*, 218–266, here, 242; cf. Cicero, *De amicitia*, IX, 31. For a discussion of this passage in the context of Scipio as a poetic hero, see A. S. Bernardo, *Petrarch, Scipio and the Africa. The Birth of Humanism’s Dream* (Baltimore, 1962), 110.

<sup>68</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 50: ‘RATIO: Caduce amicitie, quarum delectatio vel utilitas fundamentum est! nam et stantibus illis tremunt et cedentibus ruunt: id non possibile tantum sed perfacile, immo vero prope necessarium, quod hec plerumque vel fortunam sequuntur vel etatem formeque gratiam, quibus nichil incertius.’



Utility and virtue are placed in stark opposition, and the tension between the two is restated in an earlier discussion of the friendship of kings. The man who believes himself beloved of monarchs, Ratio argues, necessarily values his soul, virtue, renown, quiet, *otium*, and security little. The friendship of kings cannot be called true friendship since it encourages a man to neglect all things, to take on a servile attitude, to foster lust, and to harbour avarice.<sup>69</sup> For Petrarch, as for Aristotle and Cicero, the only reward of a true friendship lay in freely loving and being loved.<sup>70</sup>

Believing that true friendship could be based only on virtue, Petrarch seems to have followed Cicero in contending that it was perfectly possible to strike up a relationship with someone whom one has never met. Indeed, given the large number of letters which Petrarch received from people seeking to make his acquaintance, it appears that he emphasises this dimension of friendship even more than his classical antecedents. Writing to Francesco Orsini in response to just such a letter on 10 February 1368, for example, Petrarch indicated that a friendship based on virtue did not require friends to see each other. Lulled into a pleasant daze by Francesco's youthful *benevolentia*, Petrarch emphasises that each saw in the other the lamp of virtue, and despite modestly understating his own character, begs to be numbered amongst Francesco's friends.<sup>71</sup> In the chapter of the *De remediis utriusque fortune* dealing with just this issue, Ratio reminds Gaudium that Massinissa, although initially an enemy of Rome, became a friend of Scipio's on the basis merely of his renown.<sup>72</sup>

Petrarch's apparently Ciceronian emphasis on the allure of virtue and horror for utility had the effect of making love of self like the love of another. In a letter to Francesco Nelli written in 1355, he explicitly approved of Cicero's view that a friend is an *alter idem*,<sup>73</sup> and, giving further credence to this, wrote in a later letter that he felt that his Socrates had been born for him in another part of the world, so much did his countenance, mind, and virtue make them of one mind.<sup>74</sup> There was, indeed, 'nothing false, no dissembling, nothing duplicitous, but only what is pure, candid, and open,'

<sup>69</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 49.

<sup>70</sup> *Sen.* X, 5.

<sup>71</sup> *Sen.* XI, 6.

<sup>72</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 51.

<sup>73</sup> *Fam.* XVIII, 8, 2.

<sup>74</sup> *Sen.* I, 3, 4.

as he put it in a letter to Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara.<sup>75</sup> A true friend, who was an *alter idem* in the sense intended by Cicero, was for Petrarch,

a light of the soul, a leader in advice, a torch for study, a pacifier of discord, a partner in labours, a companion in travel, one who calms you when at home; neither assiduous merely at home but in the countryside, on campaign, on land and at sea; nor a companion merely in the space of [this] life, but beyond the grave a living and immortal solace...<sup>76</sup>

Indeed, if one was to build loyalty (*fides*) in a relationship,<sup>77</sup> it was necessary, Petrarch believed, to love and to be loved in equal measure, as Seneca had advised, and to open one's heart entirely to a friend.<sup>78</sup> No difference in social class could be acknowledged and, writing to Philippe de Cabassoles—then cardinal bishop of Sabina on 5 May 1372—Petrarch remarked that the Emperor Augustus not merely allowed, but also wished that Horace should be called his friend, despite his humble origin.<sup>79</sup>

Like Cicero, Petrarch accepted that true friendship was a rare commodity. In the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Gaudium boasts that he seems to have innumerable friends. In reply, Ratio asks whence came such an opinion when true friendships are rare indeed.<sup>80</sup> This statement is repeated almost like a mantra both in other portions of the text and in Petrarch's other writings.<sup>81</sup> Despite the caution which is intrinsic to this view of the incidence of *amicitia*, however, we should not be tempted to think that he necessarily advocated anything approaching a 'bunker' mentality amongst

<sup>75</sup> *Sen.* XIV, 1, 30: 'Cuius consummate quidem ac perfecte, etsi paucissima numerentur amicorum paria, in quibus preclarissimum nomen habent Africanus minor et Lelius, tamen est et hec ipsa communis bonorum hominum amicitia dulcis ac placida, in qua nulla habeat locum adulatio, nulla contumelia aut contemptus, nulla discordia, nulla discrepatio, nisi de amici commodis aut honore, sed pax et consolatio et convictus. Nichil denique in hac fictum, nichil duplex, nichil occultum, sed pura omnia atque simplicia et aperta.'

<sup>76</sup> *Fam.* IX, 9, 4: 'Et ad summam amicus est alter idem, status nostri basis, animi lux, consilii dux, studii fax, dissidentium pax, curarum negotiorum particeps, peregrinationum comes refrigeriumque domesticum, neque domi tantum sed ruri militieque assiduus et terris et pelago, neque solum spatio vite par sed post busta vivax atque immortale solatium...'

<sup>77</sup> For Petrarch, as for Cicero, *fides* was intrinsic to *amicitia*, and gave both strength and lustre to any friendship. It was, however, a subject about which he spoke relatively little. When it is mentioned, it takes its place alongside other qualities of friendship. Q.v. *Fam.* I, 6, 6.

<sup>78</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 50.

<sup>79</sup> *Sen.* XVI, 4. Petrarch is—surprisingly—incorrect in claiming that Horace was a freedman: it was Horace's *father* who had been a freedman. Note also *Sen.* VI, 4, 1.

<sup>80</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 50.

<sup>81</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 49; I, 50; *Fam.* VII, 11, 4.

friends. Although the importance of friendship compelled him to follow Seneca in arguing that the moral qualities of a man should be examined carefully before making him a friend, and inspired his utterly Ciceronian injunction to be slow in forming friendships,<sup>82</sup> Petrarch's view of *amicitia* was informed both by a positive view of humanity and by an apparently Stoical pragmatism.<sup>83</sup> In an undated letter, he warned a litigious friend not to be so quick to dismiss people as unworthy of friendship and not to be so set on befriending only the entirely good. 'I say that, if you will make all good people your friends,' he wrote, 'they will be few indeed.' For, he continued, quoting Juvenal, 'The good are certainly rare; they are scarcely as numerous as | the gates of Thebes or the mouths of the rich Nile.'<sup>84</sup> All people, Petrarch went on to say, are troubled by the perturbations of worldliness: the best man, as Horace correctly pointed out, is he who is moved least.<sup>85</sup> Instead of being excessively judgemental, therefore, it is necessary to look for the good in people. In forging friendships, Petrarch argues, we should bear in mind that it has been found from experience that no spirit, however tranquil or healthy, is not occasionally moved by perturbations and agitated by the disturbance of human things.<sup>86</sup> True friendship might be rare, in other words, but we will only find it by looking for the good in imperfect people.

Once it had been forged, Petrarch believed that a true friendship was immune to separation or death.<sup>87</sup> Since *amicitia vera* was founded on virtue alone, the presence or absence of a friend was immaterial to the endurance or strength of the friendship. Considering absent friends in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Ratio counters Dolor's sorrow by arguing that the delight of friendship is to be found in the contemplation of another's virtue, and since this may be kept in mind always, it is impossible for an *amicus* to be snatched away by absence or even death.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, Ratio

<sup>82</sup> *Fam.* XII, 2, 15–16, quoting Seneca, *Ep.* lii, 2; Cicero, *De amicitia*, XXI, 76.

<sup>83</sup> *Sen.* XIV, 1, 30, referring to Cicero, *De amicitia*, V, 18.

<sup>84</sup> *Fam.* III, 15, 1: 'Studeto bonis omnibus esse carissimus, neque verendum est ne nimios habeas amicos aut nimium tibi negotii obiciam. Ita dico, si omnes bonos amicos tibi feceris, pauci erunt.

Rari quippe boni; numero vix sunt totidem quot  
Thebarum porte vel divitis ostia Nili.'

quoting Juvenal, *Sat.* XIII, 26–7.

<sup>85</sup> *Fam.* III, 15, 3, quoting Horace, *Sat.* I, iii, 68–9.

<sup>86</sup> *Fam.* III, 15, 4.

<sup>87</sup> For a charming and eloquent statement of this, see, for example *Fam.* VI, 3, 64.

<sup>88</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, II, 53.

notes with approval that Cicero, Epicurus, and Seneca found that a lively correspondence with friends—in which the *amicus* is almost made present both in reading and writing—could further help to eliminate distance in a *vera amicitia* based on virtue.<sup>89</sup> Following Cicero's *De amicitia* closely in the section of the *De remediis utriusque fortune* dealing with the death of a friend, Ratio observes that

If—as you ought—you have loved the virtue in [your] friend, that certainly will never be lost, nor will it die. For this reason they say that true friendships are immortal, because they are never dissolved by discord between friends, and are not even dissolved by death. Just as virtue conquers discord and the vice of all, nothing conquers virtue.<sup>90</sup>

Continuing in this vein, Ratio alludes to the opening passages of the *De amicitia*. 'You have heard,' the character says to Dolor,

in the writings of Tully, that Laelius reassures himself that just as Scipio lived for him [in life], neither the fame nor the virtue of his deceased friend are extinguished in his memory. What prevents your Scipio from living for you now? . . . Death is able to take the body of your friend, but not the friendship nor his mind: for they belong to the category of things that defer neither to death nor to fortune, but [only] to virtue. . . .<sup>91</sup>

Indeed, as Petrarch observed in a letter of consolation to Philippe de Cabassoles on 25 February 1338, mourning for a dead friend was to be avoided both as a product of false love and as an example of the opinions of the mob.<sup>92</sup> The death of a friend—or even a brother, in Philippe's case—was perhaps to be greeted with joy.<sup>93</sup> Even Cicero (a pagan, no less) had recognised the immortality of the soul and acknowledged that the virtuous would find a heavenly repose after death.<sup>94</sup> As a result, as Cicero

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., quoting Cicero, *Ep. ad Quintum*, I, i, 45; Seneca, *Ep.* xxv, 5; cf. *De vita solitaria*, I, iv, 8; *Prose*, 348–50.

<sup>90</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, II, 52: 'RATIO: Si ut debes, in amico virtutem amasti, illa certe non perditur, nec moritur. Ideo veras amicitias immortales dicunt, quod nullo unquam dissidio amicorum, nec ipsa demum morte solvuntur. Sic discordiam vitiumque omne vincit virtus, ipsa vero nulla re vincitur.' cf. *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 50.

<sup>91</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, II, 52: 'RATIO: Audisti apud Tullium, se solantem Lelium, ut illi Scipio suus vivit, ut, in memoria eius, nec extincti amici fama, nec virtus exstinguitur. Quid Scipionem tuum tibi nunc vivere prohibet? . . . Amici corpus eripere mors potest, non amicitiam nec animum: sunt enim ex illorum genere, que nec morti nec fortune subiacent sed virtuti . . .'

<sup>92</sup> *Fam.* II, 1, 6.

<sup>93</sup> *Fam.* II, 1, 9.

<sup>94</sup> *Fam.* II, 1, 20–21.

had observed, to mourn the death of a person was to show oneself to be a self-lover rather than a friend, and even to give way to envy.<sup>95</sup>

This clinical dissection of the subject is given a more human face in a letter to Giovanni Colonna, probably written in about 1336. In this letter, Petrarch gently rebukes the Dominican friar for having complained that he was saddened by the absence of friends and was no longer able to enjoy their 'wonderful' company.<sup>96</sup> 'Innumerable causes might separate friends,' he wrote,

but none rends true friendship asunder. When this is present, a friend cannot be absent. For however great the distance between places separates us from the conversation of friends, by the same degree do we shatter the misfortune of absence with assiduous recollection.<sup>97</sup>

The example of Laelius and Scipio once again proves instructive, and gives credence to Virgil's observation that 'looks and words cling fast within the breast' and that, though absent, a man could yet be seen and heard as the result of love.<sup>98</sup> In the *De amicitia*, Petrarch recalled, Cicero's Laelius

<sup>95</sup> *Fam.* II, 1, 28, quoting Cicero, *De amicitia*, IV, 14.

<sup>96</sup> *Fam.* II, 6, 2: '... cuius lamentationis summa est, te acerrime atque inconsolabiliter doluisse, quod huius exoptatissimi atque optimi ducis nostri meamque et amicorum faciem videre desieris.'

<sup>97</sup> *Fam.* II, 6, 3: 'Innumerales cause segregant amicos, amicitiam veram nulle; qua presente, amicus absens esse non poterit. Quantum enim locorum intervallis ab amico conversatione disiungimur, tantum absentie detrimentum assidua commemoratione discutimus.'

<sup>98</sup> *Fam.* II, 6, 3-4: '... cuius si tanta vis est, ut morte superata, defunctos etiam amicos pro viventibus celebremus—quod post obitum iunioris Africani, sapientissimo et omnium Romanorum in amicitia gloriosissimo viro Lelio docente, didicimus—, quid tam magnum est, si, absentia similiter victa, longe positos amicorum vultus pro presentibus habeamus? Apud poetam scriptum est,

haerent infixi pectore vultus

Verbaque;

et iterum

absentem absens auditque videtque.'

quoting Virgil, *Aen.* IV, 4-5, 83. These lines from the *Aeneid* speak of Dido's love for the recently departed Aeneas. Although the identity of the sentiment (woman-man) is inappropriate, the sense of parallelism inherent within the quotation is tantalising. On the one hand, it is tempting to postulate the pairings Dido-Laelius, Scipio-Aeneas which would certainly be plausible when one considers the degree to which both Scipio and Aeneas were used by Petrarch as paragons of virtue. On the other hand, however, such an identification of characters seems not merely tendentious, but also puzzling. The pairing of Dido and Laelius appears especially troublesome, since at first sight, this might suggest an implied association between carnal love and *amor virtutis*, which would certainly cause difficulties for Petrarch's notion of friendship. An interesting sidelight on this issue is provided in the *Africa* and in the Ambrosian Virgil. Whereas Virgil's Dido is essentially licentious, Petrarch observes in two of his glosses to *Aen.* IV in the Ambrosian manuscript that Seneca

had told his listeners that he had loved Scipio's virtue, which could never die.<sup>99</sup> Although it would be 'inhuman and bestial' to deny the pleasure which comes from seeing a friend in the flesh, the delight of friendship is not restricted to the physical. If friendship were so governed, and affected by death, prison, illness, and separation, it would be very short-lived, whereas, Petrarch claimed, 'it ought to be not only as long as the longest life, but it also . . . behoves friendship to survive beyond.'<sup>100</sup>

3. *Amabit Enim Sapiens Deum . . . Amabit et Proximum, Amabit  
Virtutem . . . Amicos*

Although Petrarch's debt to Cicero and—to a lesser extent—Seneca cannot be denied, it is nevertheless possible to question the assumption that he adhered uncritically to a Ciceronian notion of *amicitia*. While it is important to acknowledge Petrarch's frequent references to the *De amicitia*, it is necessary to recognise that while this text played a pivotal role in the development of late medieval and early Renaissance conceptions of friendship, it was not regarded as incompatible with Christian ideas of friendship in Christ, and from the fourth century onwards the classical language of friendship was appropriated for different ends.<sup>101</sup> Despite the fact that Cicero's *De amicitia* exercised a strong influence on St. Ambrose's

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had amended IV, 3 ('cupidineo amore') to 'honestam admirationem viri egregii'. Rather than having been consumed by foolish love in *Africa*, II, Petrarch's Dido is determined to preserve her chastity after the premature death of her husband and refuses the hand of numerous suitors. For the remainder of her days, she devoted herself to virtue and loved Aeneas in the most chaste fashion, for the sake of his moral qualities. Viewing the motivation of her love in this fashion, the pairing of Dido and Laelius does not seem so implausible or problematic. q.v. *Africa*, II, 418–27; cf. *Triumphus pudicitie*, 154–59. For an interesting discussion of Petrarch's Dido, see Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas*, 40–9.

<sup>99</sup> *Fam.* II, 6, 4, quoting Cicero, *De amicitia*, XXVII, 102.

<sup>100</sup> *Fam.* II, 6, 7–9: 'Nec ego quidem adversor dulcissimam esse presentiam amicorum; quis enim hoc negaverit, nisi inhumanus idem ac ferus? Sed nec tu michi negabis absentiam quoque suas habere voluptates, nisi totam fortassis amicitie pulchritudinem, que latissime patet, ad oculos solos restringimus et a sede eius, que est in animo, sevocamus; quodsi fieri ceperit, angustissima quidem area restabit, ubi se amicorum caritas oblectet. Ut enim mortem, ut carcerem, ut egritudines, ut necessitates, somnum famem sitim estus algores lassitudinem, quis studiorum aliarumque rerum occupationes innumeras explicet, quibus etiam in eadem domo, ne dicam urbe, degenitum nec vultus aspicere nec semper voces audire permittimur? Ita evi brevissimi reperietur amicitia, quam longissime vite non equevam modo, sed, ut dixi, superstitem esse decuerat.' Cf. Augustine, *De vera religione*, xlvii, 88.

<sup>101</sup> Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 45–6; cf. B. P. McGuire, *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience 350–1250* (Kalamazoo, 1988).

exposition of friendship in the *De officiis ministrorum*, an essentially classical vocabulary is imbued with new meaning, and a recognisably new conception of *amicitia* is fashioned from inherited materials.<sup>102</sup> By the same token, St. Augustine also began his treatment of friendship with a discussion of Cicero's *De amicitia*, and in his letter to Marcianus offered a novel and Christian understanding of the concept while referring directly and with approval to Cicero's definition.<sup>103</sup> In later centuries, this process of assimilation and adaptation continued, and the words used to describe friendship—*amicitia*, *amor*, *caritas*, *benevolentia*, etc.—gradually acquired new meanings more attuned to structures of Christian theology. As Hyatte has observed,

[t]hroughout the medieval period, the Ciceronian-Senecan terminology of *amicitia vera* persisted in large part as the basic vocabulary of *amicitia Christiana* and also of secular sorts of friendship in Latin and vernacular works. The pagan terminology persisted, but its semantic content was radically altered.<sup>104</sup>

In the works of St. Aelred of Rievaulx, for example, Cicero's *De amicitia* appears as an important source of inspiration, but could only be understood as a text prefiguring the precepts of the later Christian faith,<sup>105</sup> and in the works of later authors, references and allusions to Ciceronian and Senecan notions of friendship were employed more with an eye to stylistic considerations than out of a concern to reproduce the intellectual content of the original texts.<sup>106</sup>

While it would certainly be incorrect to dismiss Petrarch's references to Cicero and Seneca as insincere concessions to stylistic considerations, it is not unreasonable to entertain the possibility that, as in medieval reinterpretations of the classical idea of *amicitia*, they could have been integrated into a Christian understanding of friendship, and to posit that what may initially appear to be an aphoristic approach lacking in consistency and philosophical depth may in fact reflect a willingness to adapt

<sup>102</sup> Carmichael, *Friendship*, 45; L. F. Pizzolato, 'L'amicizia nel *De officiis* di Sant' Ambrogio e il *Laelius* di Cicerone,' *Archivio Ambrosiano* 27 (1974): 53–67; M. Dorothea, 'Cicero and Saint Ambrose on Friendship,' *The Classical Journal* 43/4 (Jan. 1948): 219–222.

<sup>103</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 256; Carmichael, *Friendship*, 58–9; J. McEvoy, 'Anima una et cor unum: friendship and spiritual unity in Augustine,' *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 53 (1986): 40–92; M. A. McNamara, *Friendship in Saint Augustine* (Fribourg, 1958).

<sup>104</sup> Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 40.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.



Ciceronian and Senecan ideas to a different set of intellectual concerns, concerns which would more closely relate to his early-Augustinian conception of virtue. Although a number of patristic and medieval authors, such as Ambrose and Aelred of Rievaulx, offer illuminating parallels to Petrarch's concept of *amicitia*, he seems to have drawn inspiration primarily from the works of St. Augustine, and to have participated actively in the Augustinian tradition of friendship which dominated medieval monastic thought.

At a general level, it is important to observe that Petrarch was not above adapting Cicero's idealised friendship in a manner to suit his underlying moral and aesthetic concerns.<sup>107</sup> In the *Africa*, for example, Petrarch freely attributed to both Scipio the Elder and Laelius characteristics which Cicero clearly associated with their homonymous descendents. This tendency is reflected in other, more telling ways, and Petrarch's use of vocabulary in creating a rhetoric of friendship is striking. Although the words 'caritas' and 'benevolentia'—so important to Cicero's concept of friendship—do appear in his writings, their number is dwarfed by the incidence of 'amor' and its cognates. Throughout his writings on the subject, friendship is described primarily in terms of the *amor* shared between two or more people, and questions regarding the implications of friendship are tackled from the same perspective. Although the portions of the *De remediis utriusque fortune* dealing with *amicitia* appear to display a marginally lower ratio of such words to 'caritas'-terms<sup>108</sup>—perhaps due to the more pragmatic nature of the work—the evidence of the *Familiares* and the *Seniles* clearly suggests that Petrarch perceived there to be a strong linguistic and semantic connection between *amor* and *amicitia*. On the one hand, this is perhaps unsurprising. 'Amor' is, after all, both the etymological and conceptual root of 'amicitia', and Cicero himself drew attention to the association in the *De amicitia*.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, however, Petrarch's preference for 'amor' and its cognates seems to recall later, Christian, traditions of friendship, and specifically the Augustinian (rather than the Ambrosian) tradition. Despite his etymological aside, Cicero deliberately

<sup>107</sup> See, for example, Bernardo, *Petrarch, Scipio and the Africa*, 116–7, 121–6.

<sup>108</sup> In the seven relevant chapters of the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, 'amor' and its derivatives appear on twenty-six occasions, and are used as nouns, verbs and adjectives in roughly equal proportion. 'Caritas' and related words appear on nineteen occasions, but it is noticeable that the word 'caritas' itself only appears twice. For the most part, Petrarch uses the adjective 'carus' which does not occupy the semantic space of the related noun. 'Benevolentia' is not used at all in these chapters.

<sup>109</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia*, VIII, 26.

avoided using 'amor', and instead employed 'benevolentia' and 'caritas'. This was, indeed, a preference which was inherited by later generations. In the writings of St. Ambrose, for example, 'caritas' and 'benevolentia' continue to dominate the discussion of friendship, even though they are employed almost synonymously and are infused with the connotations of the equivalence of ἀγάπη and 'caritas' in the vocabulary of late antique Christianity.<sup>110</sup> For St. Augustine and his intellectual heirs, however, 'amor' was a central concept not only in understanding the theological distinction between the spiritual and the temporal, but also in describing the relationship between man, God, and friends. In the *De Trinitate*, for example, Augustine identifies *amor* with truth,<sup>111</sup> and—following St. John—with God,<sup>112</sup> before going on to argue that this true love of God is the love which binds us to others. That is not, of course, to say, that Augustine attached little importance to *caritas*. But while *caritas* did play a key part in the *De Trinitate*, Augustine described it as a special form of *amor*, which could be contrasted with the baser love which sprang from *cupiditas*, and thus where *amor* was understood properly, it was given precedence over *caritas* in discussion.<sup>113</sup> This is reflected clearly in Augustine's reconfiguration of certain concepts found in Cicero's *De amicitia*. While Cicero had seen the *consensio* between two friends as being linked to *caritas* and *benevolentia*, Augustine defined *consensio* in terms of a shared love—or, as Pizzolato has put it, an 'accordo d'amore'—on the grounds that human friendship and the love of God were inextricably linked.<sup>114</sup> While Petrarch's choice of vocabulary does not signal a rejection of Cicero's influence, it nevertheless seems to suggest a willingness to engage with lexical norms common to a later, Christian treatment of friendship and to discuss Cicero's understanding of friendship in the language of patristic and medieval readers of the *De amicitia*.

At a conceptual level, there is much to suggest that Petrarch consciously integrated Ciceronian and Senecan ideas into a distinctively Christian context. In the section of the *De remediis utriusque fortune* devoted to love affairs, Petrarch's characters scrutinise the word 'amor' in relation to

<sup>110</sup> Carmichael, *Friendship*, 45.

<sup>111</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VIII, ii, 3–IX, xii, 17.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., VIII, viii, 12, quoting 1 *John* 1:5; IX, i, 1, quoting 1 *John* 4:16.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., VIII, vii, 10; IX, viii, 13ff.

<sup>114</sup> Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, lxxi, 83; L. F. Pizzolato, 'L'amicizia in Sant'Agostino e il "Laelius" di Cicerone,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 28/3 (Sept. 1974): 203–215, here 207.

a passage from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* and offer a telling insight into friendship. Although expressing himself with characteristic subtlety, Petrarch's treatment of *amor* skilfully navigates the linguistic space shared by different traditions and unveils a conception of *amicitia* which, though owing an appreciable debt to Cicero, ultimately stems from a Christian reinterpretation of the semantic content of *amor* under the influence of St. Augustine.

The relevant passage of this chapter of the *De remediis utriusque fortune* begins when Gaudium asserts that he loves only what he is able to see.<sup>115</sup> Echoing sentiments expressed in *Fam.* IX, 11 and *Sen.* XVI, 4,<sup>116</sup> and referring to II *Cor.* 4:18, Ratio argues that to love the temporal is to love the ephemeral and the base. If Gaudium wishes to love in this fashion, Ratio claims, he will love nothing great. More importantly, he will set himself against St. Paul's view that one should want to love 'not those things which are seen, but those which are not seen; for those things which are seen are temporal, while those which are not seen are eternal.'<sup>117</sup> With a blind spirit and with a devotion to the bodily senses, he will neither love anything eternal nor comprehend anything correctly. Despite Gaudium's accusation that he is dragging youthful games into calumny and is unfairly refusing to grant any indulgence,<sup>118</sup> Ratio develops his position by pointing out that youth is no defence against sin.<sup>119</sup> The sin which results from such love brings only misery. If it is miserable to sin, it is more miserable to delight in the crime, and it is most miserable to excuse and to love such sinfulness. This misery will only be used up when Gaudium arrives at a more honest estimation of his enthusiasm for pleasure.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>115</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69.

<sup>116</sup> *Fam.* IX, 11, 3–4; *Sen.* XVI, 4, *passim*. A similar line of argument occurs in the *De amicitia*, but it would be mistaken to see this as the sole source of inspiration. Although he mentions the fallacy of loving only those things which are visible, and asserts the superiority of those things which cannot be seen with the eyes, he does not do so in the same manner and certainly does not mention either the soul or God. Cf. Cicero, *De amicitia*, VIII, 27–8. Note also the absence of 'caritas' from Petrarch's descriptions.

<sup>117</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69: 'RATIO: Si nichil amas, nisi quod cerni potest, nichil igitur magnum amas. Quid quod directe obvias precepto illi vulgatissimo: nolite amare "que videntur, sed que non videntur: que enim videntur temporalia sunt, que autem non videntur eterna." Vos autem, ceci animo deditique oculis, eternum nichil non dicam amare, sed nec intelligere nec cogitare quidem ydonei, vobiscum peritura sectamini et pudendos affectus honesto tegentes velo libidininem dicitis amorem: illum colitis, illum—fandi licentia—Deum facitis, ut probra verstra, que vix celum tegit, excuset.' quoting II *Cor.* 4:18.

<sup>118</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

Although it is expressed in a somewhat different fashion, it is not difficult to see that in its major respects—the tension between the temporal and the spiritual, the association of worldliness with sin and misery, the role of self-knowledge—this shares much in common with the moral dilemma which the *Secretum* addresses and with the threats to virtue examined in the *De otio religioso*. Indeed, Gaudium's condition seems to parallel that of Franciscus, and Ratio's dissection of the problem complements that of Augustinus. Gaudium's determination to love only what is perceptible to the senses leads inevitably to vice and to misery, just as Franciscus' persistence in staring 'at the ground with eyes veiled with darkness'<sup>121</sup> leads him to incur the weight of sin and the burden of *accidia*. The alleviation of their woes begins in each case with sincere self-analysis. Whereas Franciscus' condition is initially explored through a discussion of *voluntas* and *ratio*, however, it is examined in the *De remediis utriusque fortune* through a discourse on love. This is entirely consistent with Petrarch's absorption of St. Augustine's moral theology. The opposition of the love of God and the love of self or the world is a commonplace of St. Augustine's writings and, indeed, in the opening chapters of the *De vera religione*, it is possible to find a similar line of argument to that in the *De remediis utriusque fortune* expressed in terms of love with specific reference to II Cor. 4:18.<sup>122</sup>

The preliminary discussion of love—so reminiscent of St. Augustine—provides the introduction to Petrarch's commentary on the idea of friendship in the *Tusculan Disputations*. Love may be found, Petrarch argues, not merely amongst the common herd but also in learned writings in both Latin and Greek. Although Sappho is excused, Greek poets are sweepingly condemned as dealers in lascivious verse, and Anacreon and Alcaeus are singled out in imitation of Cicero.<sup>123</sup> The Latin poets are just the same and—paralleling Cicero's reference to Ibycus of Rhegium—Gaudium is directed to consider Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid, whose poems contain almost nothing except a vulgar, base form of love.<sup>124</sup> The philosophers were apparently no better, and even Plato is attacked for

<sup>121</sup> *Secretum*, proem.: 'Satis superque satis hactenus terram caligantibus oculis aspexisti; quos si usqueadeo mortalia ista permulcent, quid futurum speras si eos ad eterna sustuleris?' *Prose*, 22.

<sup>122</sup> Augustine, *De vera religione*, iii, 4.

<sup>123</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69. On Alcaeus and Anacreon, cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* IV, xxxiii, 71. It is also possible that Petrarch could have derived some of his knowledge from corollary references in Ovid: on Alcaeus in relation to Sappho, see Ovid, *Heroides*, XV, 29–30; on Sappho, see Ovid, *Heroides*, XV, 3; 155; 183; 217.

<sup>124</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69. Cf. *Fam.* IX, 4, 14.

displaying a shocking licentiousness.<sup>125</sup> That is not to say that such men were wrong in their opinions about love, but their persistent conflation of *amor* and *licentia* led them into dangerous waters. In that they believed that the wise man should love, the Stoics were quite correct, but only insofar as one is agreed about the nature of love. For Ratio, there is no room for doubt in this matter. The only proper object of love is not lust, but God himself and those things which He wills us to love:

The wise man will love God, as I have said, and he will love his neighbour; he will love virtue, wisdom, country, parents, children, brothers and friends, and if he is truly wise, he will also love his enemies, not for their own sake—I admit—but for the sake of Him who wills it.<sup>126</sup>

There is in these things no place for following the belief—which Petrarch misleadingly yokes to Cicero—that ‘love is the endeavour to form a friendship inspired by the semblance of beauty.’<sup>127</sup> Age, beauty, and their seductions are without doubt inappropriate to friendship, and are more properly called ‘libido’, a fact which may readily be observed if one looks with open and healthy eyes.

Apparently conceived as a discreet commentary on the *Tusculan Disputations*, this passage from the *De remediis* exhibits many points of commonality between Petrarch’s friendship and Cicero’s *amicitia*. Like Cicero, Petrarch distances himself from the view that friendship should be a function of any corporeal considerations and affirms that *amicitia* must be viewed as the corollary of a love of virtue. This is, however, far from being the complete picture. In prefacing his discussion of *amor* with an exegesis of II Cor. 4:18, and in introducing a reference to the primacy of God’s

<sup>125</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69: ‘RATIO: . . . Apud illos [philosophos], autem, non comunes quosque, sed severissimos philosophorum stoicos, ipsumque—quod misaberis—Platonem, in hoc errore versatos scimus.’ Cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* IV, xxxiv, 72. It is perhaps curious that Petrarch should even implicitly have grouped Plato with ‘severissimos philosophorum stoicos’, but this might best be thought of as an infelicity arising from his close use of the *Tusculan Disputations* and from Cicero’s potentially misleading ‘Philosophi sumus . . . et . . . quidem nostro Platone’.

<sup>126</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69: ‘RATIO: . . . Amabit enim sapiens Deum, ut dixi, amabit et proximum, amabit virtutem, sapientiam, patriam, parentes, filios, fratres, et amicos et, si verus sapiens fuerit, inimicos etiam amabit, non propter illos—fateor—sed propter Eum qui hoc iubet.’

<sup>127</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69: ‘RATIO: . . . In his omnibus, oro te, quis locus est pulchritudini? Sic enim in Ciceronis *Tusculano* diffinitum legimus: “Amorem ipsum conatum esse amicitie faciende ex pulchritudinis specie.”’ Quoting Cicero, *Tusc.* IV, xxxiv, 72. It is important to note that the phrase quoted in this extract is a fragment.

love in friendship, Petrarch appears to be reading Cicero through the lens of Augustine's moral thought, exploiting the possibility of integrating an amended version of *Tusc.* IV, xxxiii, 70–xxxiv, 72 with a Christian theology of *amicitia*.

Having followed St. Paul in asserting that we ought to love only that which cannot be seen with the eyes, and having equated the sensible with misery in the *De vera religione*, St. Augustine argued that those who are 'ablaze' with love for the eternal shall necessarily hate relationships founded purely on the temporal.<sup>128</sup> The reason for this is simple. The man who loves only that which he cannot lose will not merely be unconquerable, but will also be tormented by none of the envy which would bring him misery. The man who loves God with his whole being will, by extension, also wish to follow Christ's injunction to love his brother as himself. For Augustine, the term 'frater' was in this context synonymous with 'amicus', 'socius' and—in distinct contrast to Cicero<sup>129</sup>—'proximus'. For, Augustine argued, allowing for a reconfiguration of the idea of the *alter idem*,

He cannot lose his neighbour whom he loves as himself, for he does not love even in himself the things that appear to the eyes or to any other bodily senses. So he has inward fellowship with him whom he loves as himself.<sup>130</sup>

Augustine was not alone in pursuing this line of argument and, in different ways, it is common to much Christian thought on the subject of friendship. In the twelfth century, St. Aelred of Rievaulx was similarly willing to use a discussion of the different forms of love as an opportunity of shedding light on a form of friendship which retained links to Cicero's *amicitia* while resting on the foundations of Christian theology. Arguing that *amicitia* should be founded not on the object of worldly desires, but on the congruence of its nature with Christian love, and on the love of God, Aelred believed that friendship

should be desired, not for consideration of any worldly advantage or for any extrinsic cause, but from the dignity of its own nature and the feelings of the human heart, so that its fruiting and reward is nothing other than itself.

<sup>128</sup> Augustine, *De vera religione*, xlv, 89.

<sup>129</sup> Cicero had argued that friendship excels *propinquitatis*. Q.v. Cicero, *De amicitia*, V, 19.

<sup>130</sup> Augustine, *De vera religione*, xlv, 86.

Whence the Lord in the Gospel says: 'I have appointed you that you should go, and should bring forth fruit,' that is, that you should love one another.<sup>131</sup>

Where it is viewed as an extension of the exegesis of II *Cor.* 4:18, the understanding of *amor* which emerges from Petrarch's gloss on the *Tusculan Disputations* appears to reflect Christian reinterpretations of classical notions of friendship in the Augustinian tradition. Like Augustine, St. Paul, and Aelred of Rievaulx, Ratio rejects the view that man should love those things which are perceptible to the senses and, in a manner which recalls the early Augustinianism of the *Secretum*, endorses the love of the eternal which may be arrived at through self-knowledge. In the face of Gaudium's objections, however, Ratio is obliged to demonstrate more clearly the fallacy of loving the temporal. Cicero's treatment of lust at *Tusc.* IV, xxxiii, 70-xxxiv, 72 provided a convenient framework for this discussion. Adapting Cicero's words to a Christian purpose, Ratio illustrates that the 'love' found in the works of classical poets and philosophers is a worldly love, and asserts that God is the only proper object of *amor*. A man who loves God also loves virtue, his neighbour, his family, his friends, and even enemies out of obedience.<sup>132</sup> As in Augustine's *De vera religione* and Aelred's *De spirituali amicitia*, Petrarch contends that friendship—that *spiritual* friendship which involves loving another as a result of a love of God—cannot involve a love of the temporal and is intimately bound up with self-knowledge. The love of God and the love of Christ which spring from a true understanding of self are the true foundation of all friendship. In a letter written to Francesco Nelli on 13 January 1352, the point of reference in friendship is always God, 'who made us, who made friends, who made even the name of friendship itself', and this stands in contrast to the subjectivism which underpins a Ciceronian concept of *amiticia*.<sup>133</sup> Elaborating on the same theme in a letter written to Francsco il Vecchio da Carrara, Petrarch agrees with Pythagoras' opinion—reported in the

<sup>131</sup> Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, trans. M. E. Laker (Kalamazoo, 1977), I, 45-46, quoted in Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 63.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Trinkaus' rather surprising contradiction of this point. Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 75.

<sup>133</sup> *Fam.* XII, 4, 2: 'Si enim amicum vel audire vel cernere usqueadeo delectat, quid futurum rear ubi illum videbimus qui et nos et amicos et ipsum amicitie nomen fecit? si se ipsum quisque sique alios tam obnixe amat, si pretereuntibus tam iocunde utitur, qualiter is amandus fruendumque illo erit qui cuique nostrum et quod amet et quo amet, quo fruatur se, qua fruatur animam dedit? sed ineffabilis atque immensa res est et solo difficilis cogitatu.'



*De officiis*—that a man should act towards friends so that it seems that ‘several persons are gathered in one’,<sup>134</sup> and follows ‘pagan philosophers’ in affirming that there can be no friendship without wisdom and virtue.<sup>135</sup> This, however, is located firmly within the context of Christian thought, and Petrarch uses a quotation from the Acts of the Apostles which occurs frequently in late medieval discussions of friendship to develop his point.<sup>136</sup> ‘Likewise,’ Petrarch wrote, pointing to what he perceived to be the compatibility between his text and Pythagoras’ view,

the conditions of true friendship are expressed in Holy Scripture, where . . . it is written ‘The company of those who believed and who loved one another in Christ was of one head and one soul, and no-one of them whatever he possessed, claimed it for his own use, and all their property was held in common.’ [Acts 4:32] If someone were to define friendship as being faithful lovers in Christ, I certainly would not contradict him, because I do not believe there can be friendship, or any firm and stable relationship for that matter, except that Christ be the foundation.<sup>137</sup>

Petrarch’s subsequent protestation that he nevertheless agrees with ‘pagan philosophers’ is reduced merely to the status of a literary pretension: the quotation from *Acts* indicates that he cannot have seen virtue and wisdom as anything other than as functions of a love of Christ. Although pagan philosophers had no access to the truth of Christ, the flexibility of their terminology and the imprecision of the statement attributed to

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<sup>134</sup> Sen. XIV, 1, 30: ‘Hec fere omnium summa est: nil humanis in rebus amicitia dulcius, nil sanctius post virtutem, eosque qui maxime potentia ac virtute prepolleant, maxime etiam amicis indigere, cum quibus et prospera et adversa participant: ab amico turpe nichil expetendum, pro amico nichil turpe faciendum, honestum amico nichil denegandum: his pro fundamento positis, debere amicorum omnia esse communia, unum animum, unam voluntatem, nec spe ulla nec metu nec periculo distrahendam: amandum amicum ut se alterum et omnem conditionis imparitatem exequendam: denique omnibus modis id agendum quod Pithagoras iubet; ut unus fiat ex pluribus.’ Referring to Cicero, *De officiis*, I, xvii, 56.

<sup>135</sup> Sen. XIV, 1, 30; see note 65, above.

<sup>136</sup> Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 59; also, 45, 59–60, 64; cf. McGuire, *Friendship and Community*. Note that Aelred attached particular importance to this passage as the ideal of the monastic community. Q.v. Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, II, 21.

<sup>137</sup> Sen. XIV, 1, 30: ‘Que ipsa numquid non satis literis sacris expressa sunt, ubi inter *Actus apostolicos* scriptum est: “Multitudinis credentium et in Cristo sese amantium erat cor unum et anima una, nec quisquam eorum, que possidebat, aliquid suum esse dicebat, sed erant illis omnia communia”? Et, siquis dicet amicitiam illam fuisse credentium et in Cristo sese amantium, nec ego de alia loquor, nec amicitiam stabilem nec omnino aliquid firmum reor cui non Christus fuerit fundamentum.’ Quoting *Acts*. 4:32; trans. B. G. Kohl, in *The Earthy Republic*, 67.

Pythagoras allowed Petrarch to present them as complementing a Christian conception of friendship.

Although Petrarch's understanding of the relationship between *amor* and *amicitia* places him in close relation to Augustine, and sets him at a distance from classical notions of friendship, that is not to say that he used the works of Cicero and Seneca insincerely, or rejected their contributions to the concept entirely. Rather, he seems to have seen classical and Christian ideas of *amicitia* as essentially complementary, and—adopting a rather teleological approach—appears to have viewed Cicero and Seneca as having to some degree anticipated the role of friendship in Augustine's moral theology. Exploiting the degree to which classical texts served as the point of departure for later thought, Petrarch was able to mine Cicero's treatises and Seneca's letters for gnomic quotations and allusions, confident that in a Christian conceptual context, they would prove complementary and consistent. Ciceronian and Senecan propositions, which had already been adapted by theologians in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, could readily be assimilated into Petrarch's notion of *amicitia* without compromising his Christian reinterpretation of *amor* or his underlying attachment to a notion of virtue derived from the early works of St. Augustine.

A sense of this teleological method of reading can be gauged from the fact that a notion which appears to be unmistakably Ciceronian or Senecan in one letter is frequently couched in terms of Christian *amor* and early-Augustinian notions of virtue in another letter from a proximate period. An excellent example of this is provided by Petrarch's responses to the death of friends. Although, as we have seen, Petrarch's assertion that friendship cannot be dissolved by death appears to reproduce the sentiments of the *De amicitia*, the similarities seem to be primarily linguistic and reflect Petrarch's willingness to read terms such as *virtus*, *amicitia*, and *immortalis* as if they were imbued with a Christian meaning, irrespective of their original context. While Petrarch believed friendship to be immortal because it is a bond founded on virtue, the nature of that bond, and the meaning of both virtue and immortality reflect his reorientation of the term *amor* in the *De remediis*. In a letter written to Socrates on 23 June 1359, Petrarch wrote

I know that you greatly desire to hold on to me, even though our minds are joined by virtue, as Jerome put it. There is nothing which may separate those who are joined by the glue of Christ; not place, not time, not forgetfulness, not boredom, not hope, not fear, not envy, not anger, not hatred, not fortune, not prison not chains, not wealth, not poverty, not sickness, not

death, not the tomb and the reduction of the body to ashes. For this reason true friendships are immortal...<sup>138</sup>

The language here is congruent with that used both in letters examined earlier in this chapter (e.g. *Fam.* II, 6, 7–9), and also in Cicero's works. Petrarch's point of reference, however, is neither Cicero nor Seneca, but Jerome, and the role played by virtue in uniting friends is described entirely by 'Cristi glutino'. True friendships are indeed immortal because they are founded on virtue, but that virtue is described by the love of Christ.

In the same fashion, Petrarch's Christian-Augustinian reinterpretation of *amor* can be seen lurking behind the apparently flagrant Ciceronianism of *Fam.* II, 1. Although Petrarch seems to have Cicero, *De amicitia*, IV, 14 in mind when he upbraids Philippe de Cabassoles for mourning for his recently deceased brother, and even quotes briefly from the text,<sup>139</sup> an identical use of the same passage in a letter written in late 1352 or early 1353 indicates that this passage was chosen purely for the sake of an appropriate quotation. Attempting to console the Paduan clergy on the death of Bishop Hildebrand, Petrarch carefully avoided offering advice to such men,

but it should nevertheless not be allowed that you should weep for the death of such a man, lest—following the opinion of Cicero—it should be seen to be more because of envy than because of friendship that [you] bewail [this] happy man. For who except an envious man mourns the passing of a friend from the flesh to the spirit, from earth to heaven, from labour to peace, from death to life, from temporal afflictions to blessed eternity?<sup>140</sup>

As in *Fam.* II, 1, Petrarch's use of Cicero, *De amicitia*, IV, 14 is appropriate and seems consistent with the sense of the original. On closer examination, however, Petrarch's consolation is markedly different from Cicero's understanding of why a man should not grieve for the death of a friend.

<sup>138</sup> *Fam.* XXI, 9, 22: 'Scio te magno mei desiderio teneri; etsi enim animos virtute coniunctos utque ait Ieronimus. Cristi glutino copulatos nichil sit quod separet, non locus non tempus non oblivio non tedium non spes non metus non invidia non ira non odium non fortuna non carcer non vincula non divitiae non paupertas non egritudo non mors non sepulcrum et resolutum corpus in cineres, ideoque vere amicitiae immortales sint...' Quoting Jerome, *Ep.* 53, 1.

<sup>139</sup> *Fam.* II, 1, 28; see note 95, above.

<sup>140</sup> *Fam.* XV, 14, 36: 'Non audeo quidem hortari, imo vero nec permittere ut talis viri exitum ploretis ne iuxta sententiam Ciceronis, invidie potiusquam amicitiae videatur complorare felicem. Quis enim nisi invidus amicum lugeat de carne ad spiritum, de terris ad celum, de laboris ad quietem, de morte ad vitam, de temporalibus erumnis ad eternam beatitudinem transisse?' Referring to Cicero, *De amicitia*, IV, 14.

In the *De amicitia*, Cicero's Laelius defends the view that it was a mark of envy to mourn a friend's death by referring to the Stoic belief that death entails no pain and should be greeted calmly. Since no sensation remains, Laelius claims, there will be no good in death, but nor will there be any evil. For this reason alone, an *amicus* (who wishes only the good for another) should rejoice, rather than grieve, at the death of a friend.<sup>141</sup> The good which Petrarch's *amicus* wills for his friend, however, is very different from the sense in which Cicero intended in *De amicitia*, IV, 14. In Petrarch's view, the Paduan clergy should rejoice at Bishop Hildebrand's death not because—*sensu amisso*—he shall be free from both good and evil, but because he shall be delivered from the wretchedness of worldly existence into the blessed peace of heaven. The pairing of opposites reveals familiar preoccupations. It is the early Augustinianism of the *Secretum* and the tension exposed by Petrarch's exegesis of II Cor. 4:18, rather than the Stoicism of the *De amicitia* and the *Tusculan Disputations* that is manifested in 'carne/spiritum', 'terris/celum', 'temporalibus erumnis/eternam beatudinem', and one can also see an echo of Petrarch's thought in Augustine's critical evaluation of his youthful grief over the death of a friend in the *Confessiones*.<sup>142</sup> While Cicero's text rendered a gnominically appropriate quotation, the friendship of the clergy of Padua for their departed Bishop should, for Petrarch, be bound up with an idea of virtue founded on the opposition of the worldly and the heavenly, and a conception of *amor* similarly based on the tension between the temporal and the eternal in imitation of St. Augustine.<sup>143</sup>

If Petrarch was willing to translate Ciceronian and Senecan notions of *amicitia* into a distinctively Christian setting, however, that is not to say that the structure of his thought on this subject was confined by the limits

<sup>141</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia*, IV, 14; cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* I, xlix, 117–119.

<sup>142</sup> Augustine, *Conf.* IV, iv–vii.

<sup>143</sup> There is a sense in which this is reflected in Petrarch's adaptation of Ciceronian terminology in both the *De remediis utriusque fortune* and the *Familiars*. At *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69, Petrarch amends Cicero, *Tusc.* IV, xxxiv, 72 to give '... si sit amor quisquam in rerum natura since solitudine turpique desiderio sine suspiro et ardenti cura...' where the interpolation of 'turpique' and 'ardenti' appear to indicate that 'amor' was to be understood in a fashion more closely related to the early-Augustinianism of the *Secretum* than to Cicero's original sense. A similar adaptation of terminology is visible at *Fam.* XXI, 15, 26. This passage, it is true, has nothing which conflicts with Cicero's conception of friendship, but it is nevertheless striking that Petrarch uses the words 'sanctius', 'celestius' and 'deiformius' (a distinctively medieval term unknown to classical Latin and not found in English or Irish sources before c.870; *Revised Medieval Latin Word List*, prepared by R. E. Latham, [London, 1965], 136) to describe *amicitia*, all of which are redolent of a Christian adaptation of classical thought.

of classical thought. Petrarch's teleological reading of works such as the *De amicitia* and the *Epistulae morales* was based on a certain sense of intellectual detachment: although he certainly perceived there to be a thread of continuity connecting ancient philosophy with modes of thought current in the fourteenth century, he nevertheless used classical texts only insofar as they suited his purpose, rather than deriving his purpose from the writings of his classical antecedents. While a significant portion of Petrarch's conception of friendship inhabits the linguistic (if not the semantic) space shared by classical and Christian traditions, there are some respects in which it displays traits which have no place within the thought of Cicero or Seneca and which appear to have been inspired by later Christian theology, particularly that of St. Augustine.

An excellent example is provided by Petrarch's examination of the bond of friendship with regard to the individual's more general relationship with humanity. As we have seen, for both Cicero and Seneca, friendship was an exclusive relationship. Although all of human society was united by a certain bond, Cicero had argued that this bond was strongest between individuals who were close to one another. 'How great the power of friendship is,' he contended,

may most clearly be recognised from the fact that, in comparison with the infinite ties uniting the human race and fashioned by Nature herself, this thing called friendship has been so narrowed (*et adducta in angustam*), that the bonds of affection always unite two persons only, or, at most, a few.<sup>144</sup>

Friendship was, in other words, made valuable by the fact that it could only be shared by a small number of people. While Petrarch admitted that friendship was rare, however, he was not convinced of this exclusivity and, as we have seen, was not prepared to regard the majority of people as strangers to virtue. In a letter written some time after 1338, Petrarch offered Giovanni Colonna consolation on the difficulties of life. Confessing that the letter he had received from Giovanni had moved him to tears, Petrarch suggested that the tears which we shed for the sufferings of others are more honest than those which we shed for our own.<sup>145</sup> 'Juvenal

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<sup>144</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia*, V, 20: 'Quanta autem vis amicitiae sit ex hoc intellegi maxime potest, quod ex infinita societate generis humani, quam conciliavit ipsa natura, ita contracta res est et adducta in angustam, ut omnis caritas aut inter duos aut inter paucos iungeretur.' Trans. W. A. Falconer.

<sup>145</sup> *Fam.* VI, 3, 2.

says that this can be said not merely about such friendships [as ours],’ he continued,

but about all human society, where no evil is irrelevant to a good man, and teaches that tears were given to the human kind as proof of our respect. Terence had said this a long time before:

‘I am a man and I consider nothing human alien to me.’

Indeed, I do not deny that this is true. In this obligation of loving, however, there are without doubt degrees, by which we are reduced from the widest (so to speak) open space of human kindness into the narrow one of kinships and friendships, and the universal love of all people is narrowed down to love of and benevolence towards the few.<sup>146</sup>

Having observed the infrequency with which Petrarch used the words ‘caritas’ and ‘benevolentia’, this language of this passage is striking. Combined with the unusual phrase ‘in angustam’, Petrarch’s ‘caritate . . . ac benevolentia’ seems deliberately to echo Cicero, *De amicitia*, V–VI, 20. The sense, however, is the absolute opposite of Cicero’s original, and the repetition of vocabulary seems designed to emphasise the difference between the two texts. Rather than friendship benefiting from being a condensed version of the social bond, as Cicero suggested, love—from which friendship derives its name—is limited when it is restricted in this fashion. The concept of ‘universalis amor’ which implicitly underwrites this passage appears to have as its source the second commandment, and a point of comparison can be found in a letter written by St. Augustine to Proba in 412, known to Petrarch by the name *De orando Dei* and included on the list of his favourite books.<sup>147</sup> In this letter, Augustine repeated his belief that the love of God precludes the possibility of distinguishing friends and neighbours. As a result, Proba could not restrict friendship to the few, but should open *amicitia* to the whole of humanity. *Amicitia* ‘embraces all to whom love and kindly affection (*amor et dilectio*) are due,’ Augustine wrote,

<sup>146</sup> *Fam.* VI, 3, 3: Idque non modo in tanta amicitia, sed ne in comuni etiam societate hominum dici posse Satyricus ait, ubi viro bono nullum alienum malum, et humano generi pietatis ad indicium datas a natura lacrimas docet. Quod tanto ante Comicus dixerat:

“Homo sum, humani a me nichil alienum puto.”

Enimvero licet id verum esse non negem, tamen haud dubie, in hoc publico diligendi debito, gradus sunt, quibus ex amplissima, ut ita dixerim, humanitatis area, cognitionis amicitieque redigimur in angustam, et universalis amor omnium singulari quadam caritate paucorum ac benivolentia coarctatur.’ Referring to Juvenal, *Sat.* XV, 140–2, 130–1; quoting Terence, *Heaut.* 77; referring to Cicero, *De amicitia*, V–VI, 20.

<sup>147</sup> Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 117–137.

although the heart goes out to some of these more freely, to others more cautiously; yes, it even extends to enemies, for whom we are commended to pray. There is accordingly no-one in the whole human family to whom kindly affection is not due by reason of the bond of a common humanity (*communis naturae societate*), although it may not be due on ground of a reciprocal love.<sup>148</sup>

Augustine, like Petrarch, looked to Cicero for inspiration, but similarly diverged from his source when it came to *amicitia* and human society. This is no mere coincidence. Their shared willingness to project friendship outwards is a reflection of a common determination to base *amicitia* on a form of Christian *amor* which had its purest human expression in the love for one's neighbour, rather than on a more antiquated, classical form of *amor* which was intrinsically personal, subjective, and exclusive.

While it is therefore not unjustified to draw attention to aspects which appear redolent of Cicero or Seneca, it does not seem possible to contend that Petrarch's understanding of *amicitia* was necessarily either Ciceronian or Senecan in substance. It is, moreover, equally difficult to sustain the assumption that Petrarch's exploration of friendship was either aphoristic or lacking in coherence, or unrelated to the broader concerns of moral philosophy. Although an emphasis on the specifically Ciceronian and Senecan features of Petrarch's argument may give the appearance of the piecemeal construction of an incomplete set of borrowed axioms, a recognition of the interpenetration of Augustine's understanding of Christian *amor* and the language of classical *amicitia* allows an appreciation of a more coherent and unified approach to friendship which forms an active component of the wider moral concerns which exercised Petrarch in the *Secretum*, the *De otio religioso*, and the *De vita solitaria*. As with Petrarch's exploration of virtue, *otium*, and solitude, his primary inspiration seems once again to have been St. Augustine, and he appears to have been acutely aware of the immense possibilities for gnomic classical quotation offered by the saint's own adaptation of classical terminology.

#### 4. *Friendship and Solitude: From the General to the Particular*

Although it does not occur as frequently as Zeitlin appears to suggest in the introduction to his translation, friendship is very much a part of the

<sup>148</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 130, vi, 13, quoted in Carmichael, *Friendship*, 60–1.



*De vita solitaria*. The work itself was inspired by a friend's visit to Vaucluse<sup>149</sup> and it was conceived not merely as a tithe offered to a local prelate, but also as a literary gift given as a token of friendship.<sup>150</sup> As several scholars have pointed out, solitude was never intended to involve complete social isolation, and was from the first presented as being bound up with the presence of a small number of good friends.<sup>151</sup>

At Z I, ix, 4, Petrarch outlined the relationship between friendship and his understanding of the practice of solitude. Having upbraided Seneca for an apparent inconsistency,<sup>152</sup> he claims that he has never advised those people for whom solitude would be advantageous to shun friendship. 'I say,' he writes, 'that crowds—not friends—should be fled.'<sup>153</sup> In fact, provided the *solitarius* is not disturbed by large numbers, and is visited by those who bring comfort and help to his *otium*, Petrarch would certainly not deny him friends.<sup>154</sup> True isolation could, after all, have a numbing effect on even the greatest pleasures. Pointing to the *De amicitia*, he approves of Archytas of Tarentum's belief that no man could be happy on earth, regardless of his affluence, or in heaven, with all the beauty of the stars laid out before him, unless he had someone with whom to share such things.<sup>155</sup> Without a friend, the isolation of literal solitude could be unendurable, and it is this fact which emphasises how much the *solitarius* should value friendship:

Since solitude—though adorned with such great goods—would seem intolerable even to headstrong minds and to those who despise human intercourse if it were without a confidant, how ought it appear to the mild and those endowed with humanity? If a single person's conversation is believed to bring such comfort to those ignorant of friendship, what will be brought to the cultivators of true friendships by the conversation of a loyal friend, in whom they may see themselves, from whom they may hear the truth, and with whom, as the same Cicero says, they may talk as if with themselves...<sup>156</sup>

<sup>149</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z Foreword; P 'Ad Philippum Cavallicesem Episcopum'; *Prose*, 290–92.

<sup>150</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z Foreword; P 'Ad Philippum Cavallicesem Episcopum'; *Prose*, 290.

<sup>151</sup> E.g. Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 55; Bosco, *Petrarca*, 110; Constable, 'Petrarch and Monasticism,' 64.

<sup>152</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ix, 3; P I, vii; *Prose*, 370–72.

<sup>153</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ix, 4; P I, vii; *Prose*, 372: '... turbas non amicos fugiendos dico.'

<sup>154</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ix, 4; P I, vii; *Prose*, 372.

<sup>155</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ix, 4; P I, vii; *Prose*, 374, referring to Cicero, *De amicitia*, XXIII, 88.

<sup>156</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ix, 4; P I, vii; *Prose*, 376: 'Cum igitur tantis bonis ornata solitudo, si particeps careat, intolerabilis etiam ferocibus animis humanumque perosis commer-

Although the mob, the wicked, the idle, and the ignorant should always be avoided,<sup>157</sup> there was no doubt that a friend would enrich solitude rather than disturb it.<sup>158</sup>

Having observed the Christian notion of *amor* which informed Petrarch's conception of *amicitia*, the description of friendship at Z I, ix, 4 appears somewhat puzzling. In common with many of the other works which we have examined, the passage bristles with references to Cicero and Seneca. In contrast with other works, however, the manner in which these classical references are manipulated seems to correspond more precisely with the sense of the texts from which they were drawn than with the implications of an Augustinian understanding of *amor*. As in the *De amicitia*, the friendship described at Z I, ix, 4 is unashamedly exclusive. Framed in apparently subjective terms, friendship is presented as something which should exist between a *solitarius* and only a few select companions. Far from being warmly embraced, the majority of humankind are either silently excluded or explicitly spurned. The wicked, the idle, and the ignorant are not the sort of people with whom a *solitarius* should share his solitude. It is difficult to think of something further from the spirit of the second commandment and more firmly removed from the sense of *De remediis*, I, 69.

Although Z I, ix, 4 appears to cause difficulties for our Augustinian interpretation of both solitude and friendship in Petrarch's thought, the problems are much less troubling than they first appear. By seemingly clinging to a superficially Ciceronian idea of a bond between only a small number of friends<sup>159</sup> to the exclusion of the wicked, idle, and ignorant, Petrarch is neither contradicting his Augustinian conception of *amor*, nor propounding a more faithful interpretation of classical notions of friendship, but reflecting a caesura in patristic thought and medieval monastic theology. While, as we have seen, Augustine and later monastics placed a strong emphasis on the universality of *amor*, there was nevertheless a strong tendency towards the particular. The influence of Stoic and Ciceronian thought is strongly felt, but it is overlaid with a sense of spiritual closeness which derives its meaning from the soul's pursuit of Christian

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cium videatur, quid mitibus et humanitate peditis videri debet? Quod si amicitie ignaris collocutor unus tantum solatii afferre creditur, quid veris amicitie cultoribus fidelis amici conversatio allatura sit, in quo se se videant, ex quo verum audiant, cum quo, ut Cicero idem ait, sic omnia loqui audeant ut secum . . .'

<sup>157</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ix, 4; *P I*, vii; *Prose*, 376.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Cicero, *De amicitia*, V, 20.

virtue. In his *Rule*, for example, St. Augustine absorbed classical notions of perfect friendship, but located them within the context of early monastic asceticism without in any way impinging on the Christian's obligation to love all humanity for love of Christ.<sup>160</sup> Although, as McGuire has observed, there is little evidence surviving from the early medieval period, the works of Anselm of Bec signal a return to the line of classically-inspired thought which Augustine had pioneered. Following Augustine, Anselm began to explore the bond which could be formed between two (or at most a few) individuals when each looked for virtue deep within his own soul.<sup>161</sup> This recurred frequently in late medieval monastic thought. For Aelred of Rievaulx, for example, seeking inspiration from Aristotelian and Ciceronian ideas of *amicitia perfecta*,<sup>162</sup> *amicitia spiritualis* had to be viewed as an expression of a yearning for God, but could only be understood in contrast to the more general forms of love which were incumbent upon the believer. A spiritual friendship could not, for Aelred, apply to the entire of humanity, or even to the whole of a monastic community. Rather, it was a form of friendship which

is clearly an exceptional instance reserved for very few monastics, the most virtuous, disciplined and privileged... spiritual friends must have a place where they can withdraw from their brothers in order to exchange confidences.<sup>163</sup>

Given the relative paucity of the evidence in the *De vita solitaria*, it would be incautious to draw conclusions too quickly. In light of the strong Augustinian and monastic tradition of close friendship between a restricted number of companions, however, it would be similarly incautious to regard the apparent approbation of Stoic and Ciceronian thought in Z I, ix, 4 necessarily as a reflection either of inconsistency or of an uncritical classicising tendency. Petrarch's comments on *amicitia* in this passage must be read in context—that is to say, through the lens of solitude.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, solitude—like *otium*—was primarily an interior condition, a *solitudo animi*. Although it could

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<sup>160</sup> G. Lawless, 'Augustine's Decentring of Asceticism,' in *Augustine and his Critics*, ed. Dodaro and Lawless, 142–63, here 150. See also G. Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule* (Oxford, 1987); R. A. Markus, 'Vie monastique et ascétisme chez Augustin,' in *Congresso internazionale su S. Agostino nel XVI centenario della conversione, Roma, 15–20 settembre 1986* (Rome, 1987), 1:119–25.

<sup>161</sup> McGuire, *Friendship and Community*, 212ff.

<sup>162</sup> Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 62.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

manifest itself physically, in the desire to seek out lonely places in the countryside (*solitudo loci*), for example, it consisted in the expurgation of worldly desires and the orientation of the self towards the divine through the use of reason. Despite numerous allusions to classical notions of the *vita contemplativa*, the concept of solitude which emerges from the *De vita solitaria* is Augustinian in character, and Petrarch's reasoning in the text not only mirrors that in the *De otio religioso*, but also reflects the early-Augustinian ethic found in the *Secretum*. As a result, it seems somewhat unreasonable to suppose that Petrarch's reference to 'the conversation of a loyal friend' at Z I, ix, 4 should be read as an unequivocal statement of an underlying Ciceronianism or Stoicism. Given his willingness to exploit a certain overlap between the writings of St. Augustine and classical texts, the combination of the rational expurgation of worldly desires and the urge for the company of a restricted number of friends seems to fit well with late medieval, classical, and Augustinian ideas of spiritual friendship.

The objection that there is no detailed explanation of the relationship between the generality of the love of one's neighbour and the particularly of the love of a few select friends should not be cause for disquiet. On the one hand, it is important to observe that a detailed discussion of the love of one's neighbour would not have been germane to the function of the *De vita solitaria*, while on the other hand, it is worth reflecting on the sometimes ambiguous relationship between general and particular loves in medieval and Augustinian texts. Indeed, Petrarch's apparent willingness to explore both the *amor propinquitatis* and the *amor paucorum* as separate forms of the same love in different texts might readily be thought of as a deliberate dalliance with the parallelism of the same themes within the Augustinian tradition of friendship.

Although passages referring explicitly to friendship are relatively rare in the *De vita solitaria*, it is possible to adduce further evidence which illustrates the compatibility of Z I, ix, 4 with sentiments expressed in his other works. Petrarch's willingness to adapt the terms of classical friendship to a distinctly Christian context is demonstrated especially well at Z I, iv, 8. In this passage, Petrarch discreetly took issue with both Cicero and Seneca. He agreed with the ancient philosophers that it was quite sensible to set a friend whose virtue you admire to guard over you, and to act always as if there were a friend present to witness your deeds.<sup>164</sup> In contrast to

<sup>164</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 8; P I, v; *Prose*, 348–50, referring to Cicero, *Ep. ad Quintum*, I, i, 46; Seneca, *Ep.* xxv, 5–6; *Ep.* xi, 10.

Cicero and Seneca, who couched their advice in terms of the imagined presence of a friend, however, Petrarch argued that 'it is not necessary for us', presumably referring to Philippe de Cabassoles and himself.<sup>165</sup> Christ is always present with a Christian and hence is a 'true witness not only of our deeds, but also of all our thoughts.'<sup>166</sup> Christ is, in a clearly classical fashion, the friend of the virtuous man, the friend of the *solitarius*.

Despite the fact that comments specifically addressing friendship are uncommon in the *De vita solitaria*, the place of *amicitia* in the tract is telling. The manner in which intimate friendships with a select few is expressed and related to solitude, and the appropriation of the Ciceronian-Senecan idea of the friend as witness and guide illustrate two things.

First, the place of intimate friendships within the context of solitude is in many ways indicative of the unity of Petrarch's conception of the life of virtue. In previous chapters, we have seen that the search for virtue is commensurate with the search for *otium*—as an interior leisure from worldliness—and with the search for solitude—as a peacefulness of mind. Petrarch's conception of friendship is similarly bound up with the notion of virtue. Like *otium* and solitude, it is an expression of the orientation of the self towards God through the application of reason. Similarly, the practice of true friendship is in some ways intrinsic to the pursuit of virtue, in the same manner as *otium* and solitude. Where *amicitia* is understood as a function of Christian *amor*, it is a necessary part of loving properly, and hence an essential component of virtue itself. Just as in the case of *otium* and solitude, however, the relationship between friendship and virtue involves individual effort and entails subjective benefit. In the same way as the condition of *otium* requires leisure to be used for 'work' (such as the reading of saints' lives), the universal *amicitia* which is an expression of a true *amor Dei* requires the cultivation of personal friendships. Despite the wise man's obligation to love all humanity, it is a condition of his virtue that he attends closely to his moral health, and for this a few intimate friends are essential.

<sup>165</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 8; P I, v; *Prose*, 350: 'Et hoc quidem de imaginario teste vite philosophicum consilium, inter suos non inutile nobis non necessarium.'

<sup>166</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 8; P I, v; *Prose*, 350: '... hunc in his literulis obtineat locum ut quod diximus appareat, tali teste cristianum hominem non egere, cui non Epycurus aut Cicero, non Cato, non Scipio, non Lelius imaginatione fingendus sed angelus bone vite custos comesque datus homini, quo spectante, si quis est pudor, audere non debet quod coram homine non auderet. Et, quod summum ac terribile dixerim, Cristus ipse locis omnibus atque temporibus est presens, non actuum sed et cogitatum omnium verus testis, quos etsi vere afforet testis epycurus, non videret.'

Second, both Z I, ix, 4 and Z I, iv, 8 neatly encapsulate the heuristic attitude which governed Petrarch's approach to *amicitia*, and which we have observed supporting the *De remediis utriusque fortune* and the letters. Although freely using a classical vocabulary of friendship and alluding frequently to important Roman texts, these passages illustrate that Petrarch was willing to read classical texts as pointing towards the Augustinian tradition of Christian thought on *amicitia*, and to interpret them in the same teleological fashion as we observed in our earlier analysis of the *Secretum*. While it is tempting to regard a quotation from Cicero's *De amicitia* or Seneca's *Epistolae*, for example, as an instance of the assimilation of classical notions of friendship, Petrarch's interpretative attitude was not governed by the historicist assumptions underpinning such a line of thought. For him, a quotation, a reference, or word derived its meaning from the perspective from which it was viewed. Cicero's *De amicitia* or Seneca's *Epistolae* were texts which were mined for apposite quotations about friendship not because the original intentional meaning of given passages was significant in itself, but because passages could appear to convey a meaning appropriate to one writing from a later Christian perspective, or because they pointed towards the full realisation of Christian notions of friendship in the works of St. Augustine and the medieval monastic tradition which followed him. Buoyed by the confidence that the bishop of Hippo had himself made use of classical treatises on friendship, Petrarch was able to offer an essentially Augustinian understanding of *amicitia* while drawing gnomic references from Cicero, Seneca, and others.

##### 5. *Petrarch and Humanistic Friendship*

In no small part due to the limited attention which has been devoted to Petrarch's conception of friendship, his place in the development of humanistic notions of *amicitia* is poorly understood. This lacuna is unfortunate. In comparison with contemporary and later humanistic writings on the subject, Petrarch's Augustinian approach to friendship is not only wont to appear somewhat anomalous, but also serves to illustrate the uniqueness of his manipulation of classical and Augustinian concepts. In the brief survey which follows, we shall examine Petrarch's thought in comparison with three illustrative figures—Giovanni Boccaccio, Coluccio Salutati, and Gasparo Contarini—and shall see that it was the Augustinian character of his thought which set him apart from other humanistic treatments of *amicitia*.

Boccaccio's tale of Titus and Gisippus is perhaps his fullest treatment of friendship, and offers an intriguing insight into contemporary conceptions of *amicitia* or, in the vernacular, *amistà*.<sup>167</sup> Although much recent scholarship has rightly been devoted to exploring the interaction between *amistà* and oratory in the story,<sup>168</sup> both the narrative frame and the highly rhetorical soliloquies nevertheless contain within them a clear and remarkably precise understanding of friendship. And while the dynamic of the drama revolves around an issue quite foreign to Petrarch—the danger which the love of the same woman poses to the friendship between two men—the frequent disquisitions on the nature of *amistà* are sufficiently extended to allow an illustrative comparison to be drawn with Petrarch's understanding of *amicitia*.

Told by Filomena ('the beloved' or 'the lover of song'), the eighth tale of the tenth day describes the fortunes of Titus, a Roman who has been sent to Athens to study philosophy, and Gisippus, his Athenian friend and fellow student of Aristippus. After the death of his father, Chremes, Gisippus is betrothed to the beautiful Sophronia, and preparations are soon made for the wedding. In the meantime, however, Titus falls madly in love with Sophronia and is torn between giving way to his passions despite his affection for Gisippus, and the suppression of his feelings in obedience to the obligations of friendship. Just as Titus has resolved to die, he is confronted by Gisippus, and sadly confesses all. Overcome by concern for his friend, and in no way devoted to his future bride, Gisippus offers to relinquish Sophronia to Titus, and, having reached agreement, the two hatch a plan to subvert the nuptials. Although Gisippus takes part in the wedding celebrations, it is Titus who comes to Sophronia's bed and secretly exchanges vows with her under cover of night. When Titus is obliged to return to Rome, however, the two friends have to confess their ruse and, while Sophronia ultimately acquiesces, her family are naturally outraged by this deception. But through clever oratory, Titus

<sup>167</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 10.8; in what follows, references are taken from Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. V. Branca, 2 vols. (Turin, 1992), 2:1180–1204 (hereafter, this edition is referred to as 'Branca').

<sup>168</sup> See, for example, B. L. Blackbourn, 'The Eighth Story of the Tenth Day of Boccaccio's *Decameron*: An Example of Rhetoric or a Rhetorical Example?' *Italian Quarterly* 27 (1986): 5–13; M. Baratto, *Realtà e stile nel "Decameron"* (Vicenza, 1970), esp. 64f; V. Branca, *Boccaccio: The Man and His Works*, trans. R. Monges and D. J. McAuliffe, ed. D. J. McAuliffe (New York, 1976), 229–31; V. Kirkham, 'The Classic Bond of Friendship in Boccaccio's Tito and Gisippo (*Decameron* 10.8),' in *The Classics in the Middle Ages*, ed. A. S. Bernardo and S. Levin (Binghamton, 1990), 223–35; Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 143–63.



wins through and departs for Rome with his bride. In his absence, Titus falls into destitution, and, reduced to beggary, eventually makes his way to Italy in the hope of seeking help from his friend. After he is passed by Titus in the street without the slightest sign of recognition, Gisippus sadly wanders into a remote cave to sleep and finds that his fortune takes yet another turn for the worse. Just before dawn, two robbers come into the cave and begin to quarrel. Harsh words lead to violence, and one of the thieves is killed by his companion. Having witnessed everything, Gisippus, who has determined to end his life, waits in the cave for the arrival of the Praetorian Guard, and allows himself to be arrested and falsely accused of murder. In the courtroom, however, Titus—by now an eminent and highly-esteemed personage—recognises his friend, and nobly offers a false confession so that Gisippus might be freed. Shamed by the spirit of self-sacrifice, the true perpetrator of the crime comes forward, before all three are freed by Octavianus. Reunited, Titus and Gisippus renew their friendship, and, having married Titus' sister Fulvia, they all live happily in Rome under the same roof.

Like Petrarch, Boccaccio was keenly aware of the classical tradition of friendship, and made considerable use of aspects of *amicitia* which had been carried over into later traditions. Throughout the tale, Boccaccio's characters refer to and evidence dimensions of Ciceronian and Senecan notions of friendship that Petrarch integrated into a broader Augustinian structure. Like Petrarch—and also like Cicero and Seneca—Boccaccio accepted that friendship was of greater value and importance than any other social relation.<sup>169</sup> It was an unbreakable bond between two people who shared common interests, and Boccaccio had a horror both of utility and of differences in social status. At the very beginning of the tale, Filomena, explains that the sense of commonality between Titus and Gisippus gave rise to a friendship that not only brought intense pleasure, but that could not be broken except by death.<sup>170</sup> Their amity had no regard for the social distance which otherwise separated them, and to which Gisippus

<sup>169</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 10.8.62: '...il legame dell'amistà troppo più stringa che quel del sangue o del parentado, con ciò sia cosa che gli amici noi abbiamo quali ce gli eleggiamo e i parenti quali ce gli dà la fortuna.' Branca, 1193–4.

<sup>170</sup> Boccaccio, *Dec.* 10.8.7: 'E venendo i due giovani usando insieme, tanto si trovarono i costumi loro esser conformi, che una fratellanza e una amicizia sì grande ne nacque tra loro, che mai poi da altro caso che da morte non fu separata: niun di loro aveva né ben né riposo se non tanto quanto erano insieme.' Branca, 1182.

draws attention in his speech to the outraged Athenians.<sup>171</sup> As a result, the friendship between Titus and Gisippus was sufficient unto itself. As Gisippus' renunciation of Sophronia and Titus' noble intervention on Gisippus' behalf illustrated, the friendship which united them was stronger than any thought of reward or gain.<sup>172</sup>

So, too, for Boccaccio, not only was a friend an *alter idem*, but friendship was also extremely rare. These dimensions of friendship come to the fore most clearly towards the beginning of the tale. During his discussion with Titus prior to hatching their plot, Gisippus claims that in allowing his friend to take his betrothed, he would not lose Sophronia, since he was giving her to his other self.<sup>173</sup> Indeed, if this was not enough to allay his friend's reluctance to accept his proposition, Gisippus argues that he would rather sacrifice his bride than his friend. Friends are not only scarce, he argues, but much harder to find than wives: he can always find another wife, but it would be much more difficult to find another true friend of Titus' calibre.<sup>174</sup>

Like Petrarch, Boccaccio also integrates these ostensibly classical characteristics of friendship into a more broadly Christian structure. Although the tale is deliberately set in the distant past to make more acceptable the transfer of Sophronia from Gisippus to Titus,<sup>175</sup> Boccaccio has made a determined effort to 'Christianise' the moral character of the tale. Quite apart from Titus' earnest prayer to God following Gisippus' offer to renounce his bride,<sup>176</sup> Filomena's epilogue indicates that the actions of the two friends were intended to be seen, at least in part, as representa-

<sup>171</sup> Boccaccio, *Dec.* 10.8.65: '... il vostro consiglio la diede a ateniese, e quel di Gisippo a romano; il vostro a un gentil giovane, quel di Gisippo a un più gentile; il vostro a un ricco giovane, quel di Gisippo a un richissimo...' Branca, 1194.

<sup>172</sup> Boccaccio, *Dec.* 10.8.115: 'Quali stati, quai meriti, quail avanzi avrebbon fatto Gisippo non curar di perdere i suoi parenti e quei di Sofronia, non curar de' disonesti mormorii del popolazzo, non curar delle beffe e degli scherni per sodisfare all'amico, se non costei?' Branca, 1204; cf. *Dec.* 10.8.32: 'Tito, udendo così parlare a Gisippo, quanto la lusinghevole speranza di quello gli porgeva piacere, tanto la debita ragion gli recava vergogna, mostrandogli che quanto più era di Gisippo la liberalità tanto di lui a usarla pareva la sconvevolezza maggiore...' Branca, 1187.

<sup>173</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 10.8.38: '... non vo' dir perder lei, ché non la perderò dandola a te, ma un altro me la transmuterò di bene in meglio...' Branca, 1189.

<sup>174</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 10.8.38: 'Alla qual cosa forse così liberal non sarei, se così rade o con quella difficoltà le mogli si trovasse che si truovan gli amici: e per ciò, potend'io leggerissimamente altra moglie trovare ma non altro amico, io voglio innanzi... transmutarla che perder te.' Branca, 1188-9.

<sup>175</sup> Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 146; S. Battaglia, *La coscienza letteraria del medioevo* (Naples, 1965), 521.

<sup>176</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 10.8.33-4; Branca, 1187-8.

tive of Christian *amicitia*.<sup>177</sup> Similarly, there is more than a passing affinity between Petrarch's use of the Augustinian tradition of friendship and Boccaccio's assertion (through Gisippus) that friends can act as a morally corrective influence on each other.<sup>178</sup>

Despite the similarities between Boccaccio's lively treatment of friendship and Petrarch's conception of *amicitia*, however, there are nevertheless several important respects in which the tale of Titus and Gisippus finds no parallel in Petrarch's writings, and *vice versa*. It is true that some of these differences relate to aspects of thought which are either most characteristic of the classical tradition or which were carried over into Christian thought from Cicero and Seneca. Unlike in Petrarch's writings, neither virtue nor wisdom play a significant part in Boccaccio's tale. While the two friends are described as 'philosophers',<sup>179</sup> and Titus is at pains to extol Gisippus' wisdom in his speech to the Athenians,<sup>180</sup> there is no clear sense that their shared search for truth or their wisdom constitute the foundation of their friendship in the manner of Cicero, Seneca, the Church Fathers, and Petrarch. Similarly, the problem around which the story is framed—the tension between the love of the same woman and the friendship between two men—is not only classical in

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<sup>177</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 10.8.111: 'Santissima cosa adunque è l'amistà, e non solamente di singular reverenzia degna ma d'essere non perpetua laude commendata, sí come discretissima madre di magnificenzia e d'onestà, sorella di gratitudine e di carità, e d'odio e d'avarizia nemica, sempre, senza priego aspettar, pronta a quello in altrui virtuosamente operare che in sé vorrebbe che fosse operato.' Branca, 1203.

<sup>178</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 10.8.25: 'E come che onesto non ti paresse, non son per ciò le disoneste cose se non come l'oneste da celare all'amico, per ciò che chi amico è, come delle oneste con l'amico prende piacere, così le non oneste s'ingegna di torre dello animo dello amico...' Branca, 1186.

<sup>179</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 10.8.6, 8: '...e sotto la dottrina d'un filosofo, chiamato Aristippo, e Tito e Gisippo furon parimente da Cremete posti a imprendere... Essi avevano cominciati gli studii, e parimente ciascuno d'altissimo ingegno dotato saliva alla gloriosa altezza della filosofia con pari passo e con maravigliosa laude...' Branca, 1182; also Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 10.8.65–66: '...il vostro consiglio e la vostra deliberazione aveva Sofronia data a Gisippo giovane e filosofo, quello di Gisippo la diede a giovane e filosofo... Che io giovane e filosofo sia come Gisippo, il viso mio e gli studii, senza più lungo sermon farne, il possono dichiarare: una medesima età è la sua e la mia, e con pari passo sempre proceduti siamo studiando.' Branca, 1194.

<sup>180</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 10.8.61: 'I vostri ramarichii, più da furia che da ragione incitati, con continui mormorii, anzi romori, vituperano, mordono e dannano Gisippo per ciò che colei m'ha data per moglie col suo consiglio, che voi a lui col vostro avevate data, là dove io estimo che egli sia sommamente da commendare; e le ragioni son queste: l'una perché egli ha fatto che amico dee fare; l'altra perché egli ha più saviamente fatto che voi non avavate.' Branca, 1193.

origin,<sup>181</sup> but is also alien to the concept of *amicitia* found in patristic writings and Petrarch's works.

But perhaps the most striking differences between Boccaccio and Petrarch lies in their adaptation of classical tropes to a Christian context. Whereas Petrarch's conception of friendship is both linguistically and conceptually closer to St. Augustine's theology, Boccaccio either steers closer to the parallel between classical thought and St. Ambrose's writings, or overlooks the broader moral connotations of *amicitia* that were so important to Augustine and Petrarch.

As we have already observed, Filomena's closing remarks contribute significantly to the latent Christian tone of the tale; but the manner in which Boccaccio 'Christianises' the friendship between Titus and Gisippus is most reminiscent of Ambrose's adaptation of classical terminology. Although Filomena engages with familiar Christian sentiments in placing *amistà* in opposition to hatred and avarice, but in close relation to honesty and generosity, and makes direct reference to the obligation to love one's neighbour,<sup>182</sup> she also casts friendship as the 'sorella . . . di carità'.<sup>183</sup> While *carità*—or *caritas*—was a key part of Ambrose's Christian reconfiguration of Cicero's definition of friendship, it was of less central importance to St. Augustine, and was of negligible relevance to Petrarch, both of whom emphasised the relationship between *amor* and *amicitia* particularly strongly, and who each saw the pairing of friendship and love as critical to the connection between *amicitia* and broader moral concerns.

Although one might also have cause to note the absence of any concern with the problem of universality and particularity, or with the question of the death or absence of a friend, Boccaccio's preference for *carità* is particularly revealing. Stressing *carità* to the exclusion of *amor*, it is perhaps unsurprising that Boccaccio should also have chosen to set friendship at some remove from the divine, and to have isolated *amistà* from the (highly dubious) moral condition of Titus and Gisippus. In the first place, although both Augustine and Petrarch saw the love of a friend as a reflection and manifestation of a love of God, no such sentiment can be found in Boccaccio's tale. While it might naturally be objected that the classical setting of the story and the questionable morality of its protagonists pre-

<sup>181</sup> Cf., for example, Valerius Maximus, *Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri*, IV, 7; Cicero, *De officiis*, III, x; *Tusc.* V, xxii. On the classical origins of Boccaccio's tale, see particularly Branca, 1180–1, n.1; Kirkham, 'The Classic Bond of Friendship'.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. *Matt.* 7:12; *Luke* 6:31; 10:25–8.

<sup>183</sup> See n. 177, above.

cluded any such device from being included, the Christianising tendency evidenced both by Titus' earnest prayer and by Filomena's epilogue suggests that it would be equally incautious to believe that such an omission was made for purely dramatic or narrative reasons.

In the second place, Boccaccio does not share with either Petrarch or Augustine an interest in placing friendship in the context of the quest to triumph over vice and to pursue virtue. Indeed, quite the opposite is true. Although Gisippus does indeed attempt to guide his friend away from thoughts inimical to friendship, his intention is evidently not to steer Titus towards the good. Again, it could, of course, be argued that the narrative importance of deception and deceit would have made any such contextualisation impossible, but once more, it is difficult to ignore the fact that Boccaccio's Christianising tendencies did not extend to presenting *amistà* as a component of the search for a virtuous life after the manner of Augustine and Petrarch.

If Boccaccio's treatment of friendship may be said to diverge most significantly from Petrarch's conception of *amicitia* with regard to the trajectory of his adaptation of classical ideas to a Christian context, it might also be suggested that the Augustinian quality of Petrarch's thought on this subject also sets him apart from later humanists whose sensitivity for the Christian connotations of the subject was particularly pronounced.

It would not be unjust to observe that friendship was as important for Coluccio Salutati as it was for Petrarch, and Berthold Ullman is certainly correct in noting that, even if his words are discounted, we would be right to assume that it played a central role in his life.<sup>184</sup> He placed great store by his friends, and the abundant references to *amicitia* which litter his correspondence appear to betray a conception of friendship which bears, if anything, a closer affinity with Petrarch's thought than Boccaccio's *Decameron*. In common with Petrarch, Salutati's study of the ancient classics and his knowledge of Christian writings on friendship led him to place a high emphasis on familiar themes. For Salutati, the friend is an *alter ego*, for example, and the bond of friendship demands an equality which transcends social bounds.<sup>185</sup> Similarly, Salutati echoes Cicero and the Stoics in holding that virtue is the foundation of all friendship, and that *amicitia* is often best served when it is limited to a small number of

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<sup>184</sup> Ullman, *Humanism*, 73.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

close friends.<sup>186</sup> So, too, he follows Petrarch's lead in adapting such classical principles to a Christian context, and does so in a manner which is more closely akin to his antecedent's Augustinianism than Boccaccio had done. Friendship was an integral part of a broader *Lebensweisheit* and was inextricably linked to wider questions of ethics. On the one hand, *amicitia* was related to an apprehension of the divine. In his earlier years, Salutati had contended that since friendship was founded on a shared desire for virtue, and since virtue was dependent on truth, *amicitia* was necessarily linked to the pursuit of *veritas*.<sup>187</sup> On the other hand, the classical belief in the exclusivity of friendship was, Salutati believed, counterbalanced by the universalism inherent in Christ's injunction to love one's neighbour.<sup>188</sup>

Yet while Salutati's conception of friendship does appear to bear some striking similarities with Petrarch's notion of *amicitia*, the parallels only go so far. When the development of Salutati's thought and the respective roles of *amor* and *caritas* are taken into account, certain divergences begin to open which appear to suggest that, like Boccaccio, Salutati's approach to friendship was not of the same Augustinian character as Petrarch's.

In the first place, the connection between the intellection of the divine and the love of a friend which is so strongly reminiscent of Petrarch's thought seems to have been a feature only of the earlier part of Salutati's life. Since Salutati's more mature thought was dominated by an increasingly hostile attitude towards Petrarch,<sup>189</sup> and his views on the relationship between the will and the intellect underwent some development, it would be difficult to argue that Petrarch's rather Augustinian association between friendship and knowledge had a consistent analogue in Salutati's thought.

In the second place, Salutati followed Boccaccio in placing greater emphasis on *caritas* than on *amor* in his discussions of *amicitia*, a fact which may well reflect his later belief that charity was an act of the will, rather than of the intellect.<sup>190</sup> As we have already observed in relation to the tale of Titus and Gisippus, this reflects a view of friendship which is at some distance from the Augustinian perspective offered by Petrarch, and

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>187</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 3:441.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 3:344–45; 4:20.

<sup>189</sup> See particularly R. P. Oliver, 'Salutati's Criticism of Petrarch,' *Italica* 16/2 (June 1939): 49–57.

<sup>190</sup> Ullman, *Humanism*, 89. On *caritas* in Salutati's writings, see Witt, *Hercules*, 73–5.

which is more closely related to the Christian tradition instigated by St. Ambrose's adaptation of classical terminology.

Thus, it appears that, despite a shared engagement with classical and Christian traditions of *amicitia*, Salutati and Petrarch diverged at precisely those points which mark the latter's thought as having been most clearly influenced by the theology of St. Augustine. Although Salutati came closer to Petrarch's own conception of friendship than had Boccaccio, and went further along the path of bending classical ideas to Christian purposes, it is nevertheless the impact of St. Augustine's understanding of *amicitia* which also sets Petrarch's views apart.

A similar impression emerges when we turn to the thought of the reforming Cardinal Gasparo Contarini.<sup>191</sup> Like Salutati, Contarini's letters evidence a conception of friendship which was rigorously Christian in nature, and which appears to have considerable affinity with Petrarch's notion of *amicitia*. Like Petrarch, Salutati, and the Church Fathers, Contarini viewed Christian virtue as the foundation of friendship, and in discussing his amity with Tommaso Giustiniani, contrasted the love felt by his friend with the 'amiticia mondana' of the ancient philosophers who had lived in ignorance of Christ.<sup>192</sup> So, too, Contarini saw friendship as a service of God in the name of loving one's neighbour, and cited Augustine as his authority on at least one occasion.<sup>193</sup> Moreover, a friend was another self. As he explained in a letter to Giusiniani, he felt as if he were speaking to himself when in conversation with his friend, so great was the love that they shared.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> On Contarini, see particularly J. B. Ross, 'Gasparo Contarini and His Friends,' *Studies in the Renaissance* 17 (1970): 192–232; and, more generally, E. G. Gleason, *Gasparo Contarini: Venice, Rome, and Reform* (Berkeley and Oxford, 1993); G. Fragnito, *Gasparo Contarini: Un magistrato veneziano al servizio della cristianità* (Florence, 1988). Some valuable material on the background to Contarini's thought can be found in the important study of the cardinal's friend and correspondent, Vincenzo Querini, by S. D. Bowd, *Reform before the Reformation: Vincenzo Querini and the Religious Renaissance in Italy* (Leiden, 2002).

<sup>192</sup> H. Jedin, ed., *Contarini und Camaldoli* (Rome, 1953), no. 3, 15 [hereafter, this text will be referred to simply as *Contarini*].

<sup>193</sup> *Contarini*, no. 7, 23: 'È troppo gran difficoltà che uno homo di carne vestito versi in contemplatione de Dio separandosi de le cose sensibile. Et però, non potendo la imperfectione de la natura nostra che sempre versemo contemplando et amando Dio in sé, devemo, come dice Augustino, colere et amare Deum in proximo nostro, giovando al proximo nostro et ne le cose spiritual et ne le necessità corporal per l'amor de Dio.'

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 20, 53: 'Pur, con vui ragionando, mi pare ragionare con me medesimo, amandove io tanto et essendo tanto da vui amato.'



For Contarini, as for Petrarch, the principal merit of friendship was that the company of others to whom one was joined by a shared love of God could be of great value in the search for truth and the refinement of faith. Although, as Constance Furey has observed, this was in part related to a emergent vogue for spiritual discussion in small groups,<sup>195</sup> it was ultimately derived from Contarini's understanding of the search for God. For Contarini, as for Petrarch, the intellectual search for God was fraught with difficulties, and he struggled deeply to strengthen his understanding using only Scripture and the books of learned theologians.<sup>196</sup> The conversation and example of friends were immensely helpful, since *amicitia* combined both an emotional bond and an intellectual connection. Thanking Giustiniani for a letter, for example, Contarini praised the fact that his friend had revealed the truth he sought in sharp relief, and confounded all of the obstacles which retarded his comprehension.<sup>197</sup> This, indeed, was a view which Giustiniani himself shared. In a recently rediscovered document, Giustiniani not only outlined his belief that friends were bound together by 'i beni del animo', but also contended that 'le amice exortationi et le amorevole reprehensioni' would act as a spur towards the cultivation of virtue and as the source of advice in dealing with the troubles of the world.<sup>198</sup> For both men, as for Petrarch, the capacity of the *amicus* to advance the knowledge of the divine and to inspire another to virtue was reflective of Christ's instruction of the disciples through speech and example.<sup>199</sup>

<sup>195</sup> C. Furey, 'The Communication of Friendship: Gasparo Contarini's Letters to Hermits at Camaldoli,' *Church History* 72/1 (March 2003): 71–101, here 77.

<sup>196</sup> *Contarini*, no. 8, 28: 'Quelle altre cose de li theologi più vechi, li quali sempre in interpretatione mystice de la Scriptura over in admonitione di uno modo di vivere et di uno affecto di animo, al qual non posso inalzarme, la debellezza mia non sostiene, immo, se io in quelle cose verso, di timore in discontento et di discontento in timore ritorno.' Also, *Contarini*, no. 11, 37: 'Hora fornito el studio da me proposto et venuto el desiderato tempo, credo per la anxietà usata questo passato anno in quelli predicti studii, son incorso in quella disposition melancholica che ià sapeti che io pati grandissima. La qual, benchè non sia cusì intensa come fo quella, pur mi molesta con sì tristi et turbidi pensieri, con tal imagination paurose (paurose, dico, di cose che la ragion discorre esser quasi impossibile) che pocchi, credo, se trovi al mondo con l'animo più inquieto di me. Me son venuti in odio li studii, et quella sol cosa che a l'altra volta mi ralegrava, cioè la lection de la Scriptura Sancta, hora me dà grande molestia.'

<sup>197</sup> *Contarini*, no. 1, 11: 'Fo leto una vostra lettera piena de tanto affecto, di tanta chiarezza che cusì manifestamente dimostrava el vero et confutava quelle frivole rason, le qual ne retiene (et mi più de tuti li altri) ...'

<sup>198</sup> A. Gnocchi, 'Tomasso Giustiniani, Ludovico Ariosto e la compagnia degli amici,' *Studi di filologia italiana. Bollettino annuale dell'accademia della crusca* 57 (1999): 277–93.

<sup>199</sup> Bowd, 'Swarming with Hermits'.

But two significant differences appear to separate Contarini's notion of Christian friendship from the *amicitia* described by Petrarch. In the first place, Contarini's friendship was, as we have already observed, founded on a form of conversation and *imitatio* which could not admit absence. Just as Augustine had rebuked his younger self for bemoaning the absence of a friend,<sup>200</sup> Petrarch's sense of spiritual proximity led him to minimise the importance of distance and separation; but for Contarini, physical presence and lively exchange were often (but not always) crucial to *amicitia*'s capacity to aid spiritual progress. He questioned how Giustiniani's love for him could be sustained given that they could no longer enjoy each other's conversation,<sup>201</sup> and he seems to have viewed correspondence with Vincenzo Querini as a rather imperfect substitute for face-to-face interaction.<sup>202</sup>

In the second place, Contarini's conception of friendship—like that of Ambrose and Salutati, but unlike that of Augustine and Petrarch—seems to have placed much stronger emphasis on *caritas* than on *amor*, and, perhaps as a consequence of his ecclesiastical position, did not seek to place *amicitia* so strongly in the context of a personal struggle between the spiritual and the temporal, but instead focussed on a rather abstract intellectual weakness. In contrasting Giustiniani's love with that of the philosophers, for example, Contarini highlights *caritas* as the characteristic of friendship which the ancients had lacked.<sup>203</sup> So, too, a letter from Giustiniani appears to have aided Contarini's spiritual progress not because it drew him away the temporal and towards the eternal, but because, like all Giustiniani's words and all his works, it was filled with *caritas* and thus spurred him towards an emotional and intellectual bond with God.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Augustine, *Conf.* IV, iv: 'Expetebant eum undique oculi mei, et non dabatur: et ode-ram omnia, quod non haberent eum...'

<sup>201</sup> Contarini, no. 3, 15: 'Se suol dire, et li più docti philosophi dicono, che la absentia de li amici è causa over di total oblivion de l'amore, over almeno è la causa de intepidirlo. In voi vedo esser il contrario, imperochè, benchè sempre per la gentileza de l'animo vostro me haveti amato grandemente, me pare che adesso, luntano da la vostra conversation mia, più teneramente me amiate.'

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., no. 10, 35.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., no. 3, 15: 'Dil che altro causa non puol esser, se non che l'amor vostro è amor nè amicitia mondana fondata ne la delectatione di conversar et viver con li amici, la qual i philosophi hanno cognosciuta, ma è fondata ne la charità christiana.' See Furey, 'The Communication of Friendship,' 80.

<sup>204</sup> Contarini, no. 3, 15: 'Ià alquanti giorni me fu ressa una vostra lettera piena di quella charità che in voi redundando empie etiam ogni vostra opera, ogni vostra parola.'



## CHAPTER SIX

### ELOQUENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

#### 1. *Rhetoric and Humanism*

Since the publication of Paul Oskar Kristeller's article 'Humanism and Scholasticism in the Renaissance', rhetoric has been seen as one of the most important distinguishing characteristics of Renaissance humanism.<sup>1</sup> Although in later years he was careful to emphasise that humanism was far from 'reducible to rhetoric alone',<sup>2</sup> Kristeller nevertheless argued that '[t]he humanistic movement did not originate in the field of philosophical or scientific studies, but... arose in that of grammatical and rhetorical studies.'<sup>3</sup> Although it is not possible to contend that humanists were *ipso facto* professional rhetoricians,<sup>4</sup> eloquence was the medium for—and sometimes the inspiration of—the humanistic interest in classical philology and philosophy.<sup>5</sup> For Hanna Gray, '[t]he bond which united humanists,

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<sup>1</sup> Kristeller, 'Humanism and Scholasticism in the Renaissance,' reprinted in Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought*, 553–83 and P. O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought. The Classic, Scholastic and Humanist Strains* (New York, 1961), 92–119. All page subsequent references to this article will relate to *Renaissance Thought*. For an interesting examination of the conceptions of the Renaissance offered by Kristeller and Eugenio Garin, see C. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians and Latin's Legacy* (Baltimore, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> P. O. Kristeller, 'Rhetoric in Medieval and Renaissance Culture,' in *Renaissance Eloquence. Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric*, ed. J. J. Murphy (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1983), 1–20, here 2.

<sup>3</sup> Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 100.

<sup>4</sup> Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 102. See also the vigorous debate between Hans Baron and Jerrold Seigel on this subject. J. Seigel, '“Civic Humanism” or Ciceronian Rhetoric? The Culture of Petrarch and Bruni,' *Past and Present* 34 (1966): 1–48; H. Baron, 'Leonardo Bruni: “Professional Rhetorician” or “Civic Humanist”?' *Past and Present* 36 (1967): 21–37.

<sup>5</sup> The bibliography which has grown up around this point is too vast even for a pretence at comprehensiveness to be attempted, but the classic statements remain Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 102ff; Gray, 'Renaissance Humanism'. More recently, see Monfasani, 'Humanism and Rhetoric'. For the place of this idea within the broader context of competing interpretations of humanism and Renaissance, see, for example, W. J. Bouwsma, 'Changing Assumptions in Later Renaissance Culture,' *Viator* 7 (1976): 421–40; idem, *The Culture of Renaissance Humanism*, (American Historical Association, 1973), 9; D. Weinstein, 'In Whose Image and Likeness? Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33/1 (Jan.–Mar. 1972): 165–176; D. A. LaRusso, 'Rhetoric in the Italian

no matter how far separated in outlook or in time, was a conception of eloquence and its uses.”<sup>6</sup>

This conception of eloquence was not such that would allow humanistic writing to be characterised pejoratively as ‘merely rhetorical’. Mirroring the close relationship between chairs of moral philosophy and rhetoric or poetry at Italian universities from the fifteenth century onwards, the *vera eloquentia* was identified closely with ethical concerns and contrasted with ‘sophistry’.<sup>7</sup> As Gray has observed, “True eloquence, according to the humanists, could arise only out of a harmonious union between wisdom and style; its aim was to guide men toward virtue and worthwhile goals, not to mislead them for vicious or trivial purposes.”<sup>8</sup> The idea that ‘true’ eloquence should urge the listener or reader to adhere to the good was the basis for the humanistic critique of scholasticism. While scholasticism and humanism developed in parallel in Italy and did not clash over substantial philosophical issues, humanists from the early fourteenth century were accustomed to attack the schoolmen for the ugliness of their style and for their failure to concentrate sufficiently on the inculcation of wisdom.<sup>9</sup>

Although the eloquence of the humanists retained many links with the rhetoric of the medieval *artes dictaminis*, especially as a result of French influences, it is generally held that this association between wisdom and eloquence—or between rhetoric and philosophy, as it is sometimes expressed—was inherited primarily from classical treatises on the subject.<sup>10</sup> As John Ward has pointed out, the ‘sustaining didactic

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Renaissance’, in *Renaissance Eloquence*, ed. Murphy, 37–55; Gouwens, ‘Perceiving the Past: Renaissance Humanism after the “Cognitive Turn”’, esp. 62f.

<sup>6</sup> Gray, ‘Renaissance Humanism,’ 498.

<sup>7</sup> Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 109–110; Gray, ‘Renaissance Humanism,’ 498; Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, xi–xvii, 173; C. Trinkaus, ‘A Humanist’s Image of Humanism: The Inaugural Oration of Bartolommeo della Fonte,’ *Studies in the Renaissance* 7 (1960): 90–147.

<sup>8</sup> Gray, ‘Renaissance Humanism,’ 498.

<sup>9</sup> Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 110–17; Gray, ‘Renaissance Humanism,’ 499–500; Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 215–18. On scholasticism in Italy, see, for example, H. Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Oxford, 1936), 1: 234ff; B. Nardi, ‘L’averroismo Bolognese nel secolo XIII e Taddeo Alderotto,’ *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 4 (1949): 11–22.

<sup>10</sup> Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 102–3; idem, ‘Rhetoric in Medieval and Renaissance Culture,’ *passim*; Gray, ‘Renaissance Humanism,’ 499–500; Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 173–225; Ullman, ‘Some Aspects of the Origins of Italian Humanism,’ *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 27–40. In the past 25 years, this view has come under increasing criticism and the decisive influence of medieval *dictatores* on humanistic style has been brought more clearly into focus. It is, however, still generally assumed that the association between wisdom and eloquence was received primarily from classical, and not medieval treatises. R. G. Witt, ‘Medieval “Ars Dictaminis” and the Beginnings of Humanism: a New Construction

curriculum behind this pursuit of eloquence was classical rhetorical theory,' and—although Greek rhetoric was later to play an increasingly important role—the primary texts remained Cicero's *De inventione*, *Orator*, *De oratore*, Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* and the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.<sup>11</sup> While Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*, in particular, has been recognised as having played a prominent role in shaping the *ars predicandi* during the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance,<sup>12</sup> he is held to have exerted only a very limited influence in other fields, and his importance is commonly thought to pale in comparison to that of Cicero and Quintilian.

In keeping with general interpretations of Renaissance rhetoric, Petrarch adopted a broad and inclusive approach when writing about eloquence, and appears to have been unwilling to distinguish between literary forms. Throughout his life, he used 'eloquentia' and its cognates to refer to all species of literary composition and reflections of this semantic flexibility can be glimpsed in telling incidental comments. In the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, for example, Petrarch refers to the 'utriusque eloquii principes',<sup>13</sup> whom he identifies as Cicero and Virgil in the *De vita solitaria* and in a letter to the grammarian Zanobi da Strada.<sup>14</sup> Prose and poetry could equally well be accommodated by 'eloquentia'. But just as 'eloquentia' denotes a multiplicity of literary forms, 'poesis'—which 'shades off' into grammar as a result of its intimate relationship with grammar<sup>15</sup>—was also used as a synonym for 'eloquentia' in many of Petrarch's works, especially in the 1340s and 1350s.<sup>16</sup>

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of the Problem,' *Renaissance Quarterly* 35/1 (Spring 1982): 1–35; idem, *Footsteps*, *passim*. Cf. Q. R. D. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1978), 1:23–68.

<sup>11</sup> J. O. Ward, 'Renaissance Commentators on Ciceronian Rhetoric,' in *Renaissance Eloquence*, ed. Murphy, 126–73, here 126; Kristeller, 'Rhetoric in Medieval and Renaissance Culture,' 3–6; Gray, 'Renaissance Humanism,' 503–4; G. A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric & Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill and London, 1999), 226–30.

<sup>12</sup> Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 210, 219, 221–5; on the *ars predicandi*, see, for example, C. S. Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400) Interpreted from Representative Works* (New York, 1928), 228–57; J. J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages. A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1974), 269–355.

<sup>13</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, II, 102: '... si hinc dubitas, utriusque eloquii principes interroga ...'

<sup>14</sup> *De vita solitaria* Z I, v, 2; P I, vii; *Prose*, 366–8; *Fam.* XII, 3, 18.

<sup>15</sup> Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas*, 25.

<sup>16</sup> For later continuations of this, see, for example, B. Vickers, 'Rhetoric and Poetics,' in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. C. B. Schmitt, Q. Skinner, E. Kessler, and J. Kraye (Cambridge, 1988), 715–45, here 715–24.

The flexibility of Petrarch's rhetorical lexicon is mirrored by what he seems to have regarded as certain points of commonality between different fields of endeavour. Apparently more interested in the uses of eloquence than in its technical dimensions, he was exercised particularly by a perceived relationship between poetry and moral philosophy. In the *Posteritati*, for example, he claimed that he had always had a particular aptitude for moral philosophy and poetry, and, even though he admitted that he had abandoned the latter for the former in later years, the two seem implicitly yoked together.<sup>17</sup> Numerous works were devoted to exploring this relationship and the problem of how—or if—the two might be combined recurred throughout his life. In addition to the *Invective contra medicum* and the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*—in which his position as a poet was defended against the claims of contemporary Aristotelians—Petrarch addressed the theme constructively in numerous letters, in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, and perhaps most strikingly in the Coronation Oration and the *Africa*.

Petrarch occupies an important place in the historiography of Renaissance rhetoric and is especially significant for interpretations of the development of the relationship between eloquence and wisdom. Although, concentrating particularly on technical aspects of the discipline, Witt has attempted to present him as part of a broader rhetorical trend, contributors to which included Lovato dei Lovati and Albertino Mussato, Petrarch is generally held to have played an important role in elaborating a set of intellectual tools for navigating the waters between moral philosophy and rhetoric.<sup>18</sup> Kennedy evokes general historical opinion in attributing to Petrarch a pivotal role, contending that he 'envisioned a synthesis of wisdom and eloquence in both civil and academic context, and this view was taken up by some of his successors, including Coluccio Salutati and Lorenzo Valla.'<sup>19</sup>

Interpretations of Petrarch's rhetorical theory vary widely, and any attempt to synthesise them fully would perhaps be in vain; but although disagreement over detail abounds, there is nevertheless broad consensus for the view that his thought on the relationship was characterised by certain features. Despite implying a connection in the *Posteritati*, Petrarch

<sup>17</sup> *Posteritati* (Sen. XVIII, 1); Prose, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Witt, *Footsteps*, 230–91.

<sup>19</sup> Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 228. So also Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 31–2, referring to H. Weisinger, 'Who Began the Revival of Learning? The Renaissance Point of View,' *Papers of the Michigan Academy* 29 (1944): 561–7. Also J. Seigel, 'Ideals of Eloquence and Silence in Petrarch,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 26 (1965): 146–74.



is seen to have perceived a tension between the persuasive function of rhetoric and the demands or methods of moral philosophy. In attempting to resolve this tension, he came to qualify his admiration for true philosophy by arguing that there were circumstances in which eloquence was superior to, or even supplanted moral philosophy as a source of truth. In formulating this resolution, it is held that Petrarch drew on a multiplicity of sources, but—while his thought could nevertheless not be described as a simple copy of Cicero's rhetorical theory—his understanding of the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy was based primarily on a Ciceronian model. Although St. Augustine's influence is perceived always to have loomed in the background, it is generally thought that his impact on the shape of Petrarch's view of eloquence was minimal at best.

Although Petrarch was drawn to the idea of a simple and harmonious union, he was, for Jerrold Seigel, deeply troubled by the possibility that the literary practices proper to eloquence would lead him into self-contradiction.<sup>20</sup> While he prized consistency highly, Petrarch knew that 'a basic rhetorical principle directed the orator to fit his speech not only to his subject, but also to his audience and circumstances. As these changed, so must the orator's message.'<sup>21</sup> Consequently, although Petrarch accepted that 'the ideal of wisdom was more exalted than the ideal of eloquence . . . he sometimes described true philosophy in a way which suggested that it was dependent on genuine eloquence.'<sup>22</sup> While the Stoic ideal of virtue 'met with the highest standards of truth and consistency,' its rigorous strictures sometimes proved so demanding that they could only be followed by transcending human nature.<sup>23</sup> The more flexible teachings of the Peripatetics—which were 'most relevant to the lives of ordinary men'—were thus attractive where the unbending message of Stoic philosophy might have been inappropriate.<sup>24</sup> Drawing heavily on Cicero's works, Seigel argues that Petrarch adopted both perspectives, giving priority to one or the other as circumstances required. He was, then, able to speak 'as a philosopher on behalf of the Stoics with as much force as he employed in speaking as an orator on behalf of the Peripatetics.'<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 34–49.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

Despite the emphasis which he places on the influence of Cicero's rhetorical theory, however, Seigel suggests that Petrarch's occasional scepticism towards eloquence was also nurtured by St. Augustine in some measure. Finding that his Christian sensibilities led him to perceive a greater difference between 'the needs of the inner man and the impulses of his worldly companion' than Cicero had recognised, Petrarch found in St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* an approach to rhetoric which spoke to his 'worry lest the pursuit of eloquence and its glories turn him from a higher path.'<sup>26</sup> But for Seigel, St. Augustine's influence on Petrarch's understanding of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy could be viewed in terms of the *negation* of rhetoric. 'For Augustine,' Seigel contends, following Mazzeo, 'spiritual progress could be represented by a movement from speech to silence, from outer appearance to inner truth' and hence, for Petrarch, '[v]eritas in silentio represented . . . an ideal of life on a higher plane than the one the orator occupied.'<sup>27</sup> In other words, silence—the antithesis of eloquence—was the highest goal to which Petrarch's inner soul could aspire, and it was only in this limited respect that Seigel believed that St. Augustine's impact could be felt. And since 'Petrarch's basic understanding of the problems of moral philosophy, and of the limitations of rhetoric in relation to it, certainly derived from Cicero,' it was evident that '[e]ven here . . . Petrarch had not departed very far from Cicero.'<sup>28</sup>

In *The Poet as Philosopher*, Charles Trinkaus implicitly accepts that the task of eloquence was moral suasion, but conflates Petrarch's understanding of 'philosophy' with dialectical reasoning in suggesting that he saw poetry as offering rival and superior access to moral truths. Concentrating heavily on two of the invectives, Trinkaus contends that Petrarch 'proposed that poetic theology and rhetoric, rather than philosophy were the intellectual instruments and disciplines best fitted for the pursuit of the Christian goal of salvation and the cure of souls.'<sup>29</sup> In part, this rests on the view that the practice of poetry was, like the practice of philosophy, in some way associated with moral discovery. Responding to the insults of the papal physician in the *Invective contra medicum*, Petrarch countered the claim that poetry should be subordinate to medicine by substituting eloquence 'as the true medium for philosophy and theology rather than

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., referring to Mazzeo, 'St. Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence'.

<sup>28</sup> Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 46.

<sup>29</sup> Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 90.

the syllogistic demonstrations of dialectic used by the scholastics.<sup>30</sup> Contrary to the doctor's assertions, rhetoric is of no value to one who should cure the body, but is of great value to one who would cure souls. Although it was of sometimes variable quality, poetry was the source of philosophical and theological truths,<sup>31</sup> and it has been suggested elsewhere that Petrarch—like Boccaccio—seems to have believed that 'the gift of poetry is divinely bestowed', while poets by their nature 'seek truth and especially truth about God.'<sup>32</sup> In part, however, it was poetry's persuasive role that allowed it to supplant moral philosophy. In his interpretation of the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, Trinkaus argues that since the function of rhetoric is to urge men to the good, and the will is the determinant of virtue or vice, Petrarch believed that rhetoric must necessarily move the will. As in the *Invective contra medicum*, this is expressed in opposition to a form of scholasticism. 'Aristotle's purpose coincides with Petrarch's,' Trinkaus suggests, 'but Aristotle does not succeed in transforming the will... Aristotle's is a rhetorical, not a philosophical failure. One finds the needed force to activate the will instead in Cicero and Seneca and Horace.'<sup>33</sup> While it is possible to gain greater learning from Aristotle, a man may derive a more intense longing for the good from works which rely on the precepts of classical rhetoric, even where those works were written by pagan authors.<sup>34</sup>

In his analysis of Petrarch's conception of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy, Trinkaus accords a rather greater role to St. Augustine than is found in Seigel's work, but his influence nevertheless remains somewhat restricted in scope. Trinkaus acknowledges that Petrarch turned to St. Augustine for inspiration in the *Invective contra medicum*, and used the saint as an authority not only for his criticism of philosophers, but also for his understanding of what Curtius has termed

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 100–103.

<sup>32</sup> R. G. Witt, 'Coluccio Salutati and the Conception of the *Poeta Theologus* in the Fourteenth Century,' *Renaissance Quarterly* 30/4 (Winter 1977): 538–63, here 542–3.

<sup>33</sup> Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 108; idem, 'The Question of Truth in Renaissance Rhetoric and Anthropology,' in *Renaissance Eloquence*, ed. Murphy, 207–20, here, 209–10. It is worth noting that in 'The Question of Truth', Trinkaus further supports his argument from Petrarch, *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 111 with reference to *Secretum*, I. See also Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 40–1; Witt, *Footsteps*, 244–5; Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 220–21 (noting also 170–78).

<sup>34</sup> Gray, 'Renaissance Humanism,' 501.

'biblical poetics'.<sup>35</sup> But while the effect of St. Augustine's thought could be detected in Petrarch's examination of the allegorical meaning of Scripture, Trinkaus contended that his view of poetry as a form of moral suasion found its source not in Christian rhetoric, but in the Stoic doctrine of the will.

It must be granted that the interpretations of which Seigel and Trinkaus offer the fullest treatment are in many ways appealing, despite their differences. In each case, the relationship between moral philosophy and eloquence described speaks to the question of how to reconcile function and subject matter with the implications of oratorical style latent even in the treatment of ῥητορικὴ in Plato's *Gorgias*. When their methodology is considered more closely, however, it does not seem unreasonable to treat these interpretations with some caution, and to regard their assessment of St. Augustine's contribution to Petrarch's thought with some scepticism.

Both Seigel and Trinkaus base their arguments on the contention that Petrarch perceived there to be a tension between eloquence and philosophy. Although in many ways instinctively attractive, however, the identification of this tension appears in large degree to be a function of the evidential approaches adopted. In *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism*, Seigel is initially prepared to countenance the possibility of eloquence and moral philosophy having enjoyed a relatively close association, but comes to argue that, despite the implications of the *Posteritati*, Petrarch was tortured by the possibility that the 'consistency' of the philosophical positions which he aspired to manifest was compromised by the potential for 'inconsistency' latent within eloquence itself. This idea, and its importance to Petrarch's thought, is first justified in relation to a confusion of stylistic imitation and the emulation of virtuous figures, and to the suggestion that the single word 'consonas' in a letter to Tomasso da Messina infers a preoccupation with logical consistency. Developing the argument further, however, Seigel uses a reading of Petrarch's 'inner struggles' in the *Secretum* as additional evidence for a tension between eloquence and moral philosophy. Observing that Franciscus was tormented by the difficulty of reconciling his appetite for glory with his desire for virtue, and associating much of Augustinus' recommendation of virtue with Stoicism, Seigel infers that Petrarch saw a tension between his aspiration to eloquence and his moral sentiments. Pursuing this method, the resolution

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<sup>35</sup> Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 100–2; E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. R. Trask, (New York, 1953), 40f.

of the perceived tension—based on a pragmatic equivocation between different approaches—is then derived from the supposed moral content of different works. Although, as some reviewers observed, Seigel attaches a sometimes vague meaning to the word ‘philosophy’,<sup>36</sup> it is striking that in proposing the idea of a tension, he relies not on a searching analysis of Petrarch’s actual statements of the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy, but on a questionable reading of incidental remarks and a blurring of the distinction between moral sentiments and rhetorical theory derived from a problematic understanding of key texts. The confusion of apparently ‘Stoical’ and ‘Peripatetic’ maxims (attributions which are themselves, as we have already seen, debateable) with the rhetorical strategies adopted by those schools seems not only to erode the wider validity of Seigel’s conclusion, but also calls into question his evaluation of the nature of the tension between moral philosophy and eloquence.

The idea of ‘tension’ is expressed in a rather different form by Charles Trinkaus, but the questions which may be raised about his method of justification are nonetheless troubling. In *The Poet as Philosopher*, Trinkaus’ analysis is based almost exclusively on the evidence of the *Invective contra medicum* and the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, and, while this is not in itself improper, the reluctance to place these texts in a broader context and to treat key terms with more precision appears to have coloured the conclusions drawn. Although Petrarch’s rebuttal of Aristotelianism deserves close attention in relation to his conception of poetry, it seems somewhat unconvincing not only to conflate ‘philosophy’ with dialectical reasoning, but also to infer from this that poetry was intended to supplant moral philosophy *tout court* in Petrarch’s wider understanding of the nature of eloquence. By the same token, Petrarch’s somewhat elusive prose may present the reader with a number of interpretational problems, but it is nevertheless striking that Trinkaus seems not to distinguish clearly between poetic composition and the reading of poetry, and thus confidence in the assertion that poetry *per se* was for Petrarch the ‘source’ of philosophical and theological truths seems to be weakened. Perhaps of greatest importance to Trinkaus’ argument, however, is the assumption of an underlying voluntarism in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*. The emphasis on the will as the determinant of virtue provides the basis for

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<sup>36</sup> H. H. Gray, Review of *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* by Jerrold Seigel, *American Historical Review* 75/4 (Apr. 1970): 1096–98, here 1097.

Trinkaus' understanding of Petrarch's 'rhetorical' objection to philosophy. In previous chapters, however, we have seen that—far from embracing the Stoic doctrine of the will—Petrarch adhered to the moral theology of the young St. Augustine. Although the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* and even the *Invective contra medicum* contain passages which appear to be redolent of the New Academy, it has been shown that they may be viewed as consistent with an ethical system which presents the rational apprehension of the *vera felicitas* as the prelude to the abandonment of worldly desires and the formation of a lasting love of God. Recognising this, it is necessary to question not merely Trinkaus' assertion that poetry should supplant moral philosophy, but also his contention that the two were intrinsically in conflict.

The inference of Ciceronianism in Petrarch's rhetorical theory appears to be more robust. The esteem in which Petrarch held Cicero cannot, of course, be denied, and it would be ill-judged to dismiss the care with which he studied and quoted from texts such as the *De oratore*, the *Orator*, and the *De inventione*. The fact that questions may be raised about the approaches followed by both Seigel and Trinkaus, however, necessarily casts some doubt on the validity of describing the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy outlined in his works as 'Ciceronian'. This is not to say that Petrarch's appeals to Cicero's authority and frequent references to his rhetorical treatises were insincere, but in the absence of the voluntarism so important to Trinkaus, and the eclecticism relied upon by Seigel, it would be incautious to infer from them that there was any deeper conceptual affinity. As with the apparently 'Stoical' passages in the *Secretum*, it is perhaps too easy to overlook Petrarch's capacity to have alluded to Cicero's works with propriety from within the context of a quite different rhetorical tradition.

Despite the immense strides which have been taken in the field in the last sixty years, it does not seem unjust to suggest that when referring to Petrarch there is still something of a tendency to write the history of rhetoric—in Richard McKeon's words—as the monotonous enumeration of doctrine, or preferably sentences, repeated from Cicero, or commentators on Cicero.<sup>37</sup> Commenting on Seigel's *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism*, reviewers observed a tendency to '[leap] from Cicero

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<sup>37</sup> R. McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages,' *Speculum* 17/1 (Jan. 1942): 1–32, here 1.

to Petrarch as if nothing had intervened in all that time'<sup>38</sup> and to dismiss 'the specifically Christian component... of "wisdom"'.<sup>39</sup> This tendency has, however, proved remarkably durable and little effort has been made to examine more closely Cicero's role in later rhetorical theory in relation to Petrarch's understanding of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy.<sup>40</sup>

There is little doubt that Cicero exerted an immense influence on the shape of rhetorical theory from late antiquity to the fourteenth century.<sup>41</sup> It would, however, be mistaken to suppose either that his understanding of rhetoric was treated in the same manner at all times by all people, or that his influence was not in some respects matched or surpassed by that of other figures. Although Cicero remained an important point of reference for virtually all rhetorical theorists throughout antiquity and the Middle Ages, the history of the use of his thought in this area is neither simple nor strictly linear, with portions of his conception of eloquence having different resonance depending on the tradition (philosophical, theological, rhetorical, logical etc.) from within which a particular author was writing and the immediate end to which his efforts were directed. While it is unnecessary in this context to explore the precise details of the reception and uptake of Cicero's rhetorical works, it is important to note the degree to which he remained a significant point of reference despite the changing valency of his thought and the different purposes which his works were made to serve.

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<sup>38</sup> J. J. Murphy, Review of *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* by Jerrold Seigel, *Speculum* 45/1 (Jan. 1970): 169–70, here 169.

<sup>39</sup> Gray, Review of *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism*, 1097. See also criticisms made in N. Struever, Review of *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* by Jerrold Seigel, *History and Theory* 11/1 (1972): 64–74.

<sup>40</sup> Witt, for example, repeats Seigel's opinion without question and Trinkaus expressly indicates that '[t]he discussion will not try to relate the poetic and rhetorical Christian culture of the Renaissance to its many medieval precedents, at least from Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* to the prescholastic culture of the twelfth century. It assumes what is obvious, that the originality of statement made in a polemical context is not to be sought in the literalness of statement but in relation to the larger context': Witt, *Footsteps*, 243 n. 38; Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 90 n. 3.

<sup>41</sup> J. O. Ward, *Ciceronian Rhetoric in Treatises, Scholias and Commentary* (Turnhout, 1995) is fundamental, but note also J. J. Murphy, 'Cicero's Rhetoric in the Middle Ages,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 53 (1967): 334–41; V. Cox, 'Ciceronian Rhetoric in Italy, 1260–1350,' *Rhetorica* 17 (1999): 239–88.



Cicero's treatises affected a multiplicity of fields, ranging from logic to theology, but for many later writers on rhetoric, his suggestion that the orator should have a grounding in that branch of philosophy which was concerned with life and *mores* proved to be of particular significance and served as the basis for the elaboration of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy in a number of different directions. In each case, a palpable connection with the Ciceronian source material was preserved, even where the author deviated from its sense. In antiquity itself, Quintilian is of particular relevance and, together with Cicero, came to exert a dominant effect on the development of literary rhetoric in the Middle Ages.<sup>42</sup> Responding to Cicero's treatises in the *Institutio oratoria*, Quintilian presented the association between rhetoric and philosophy as a function of the orator's moral condition. Recognising that Cicero 'was not primarily concerned with the moral aspect', and perhaps distressed by the misuse of rhetoric during Domitian's reign, Quintilian adapted Cicero's rhetorical theory to his own age by arguing that the orator should be 'vir bonus dicendi peritus'.<sup>43</sup> Despite the fragmentary transmission of the *Institutio Oratoria* in later centuries until Poggio Bracciolini's rediscovery of the complete text in 1416,<sup>44</sup> the notion of the 'vir bonus' enjoyed considerable popularity and found admirers in Cassiodorus, Fortunatianus, and Isidore of Seville, all of whom were also devotees (to one degree or another) of Cicero.

Other avenues of elaboration were also possible. Although of rather less importance to the later evolution of literary rhetoric, Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae*, a work of considerable significance in the medieval grammar curriculum,<sup>45</sup> and the focus of an extended controversy during

<sup>42</sup> McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages,' 4–5; P. S. Boskoff, 'Quintilian in the Late Middle Ages,' *Speculum* 27 (1952): 71–8; C. C. Coulter, 'Boccaccio's Knowledge of Quintilian,' *Speculum* 33 (1958): 490–6.

<sup>43</sup> Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, 12.1.1. M. Winterbottom, 'Quintilian and the *vir bonus*,' *Journal of Roman Studies* 54/1&2 (1964): 90–7, here 90, 96.

<sup>44</sup> On the rediscovery of the *Institutio Oratoria*, see P. G. Gordan, ed. and trans., *Two Renaissance Book Hunters: The Letters of Poggio Bracciolini to Nicolaus de Niccolis* (New York, 1966), 193–96.

<sup>45</sup> R. Black and G. Pomaro, *Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Education* (Florence, 2000), 3–34. For the grammar curriculum more generally, see, for example, P. F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy. Literacy and learning, 1300–1600* (Baltimore, 1989); R. Black, 'Italian Renaissance education: changing perspectives and continuing controversies,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52/2 (April–June 1991): 315–34; P. F. Grendler, 'Reply to Robert Black,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52/2 (April–June 1991): 335–37; R. Black 'Reply to Paul Grendler,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52/3 (July–Sept. 1991): 519–20.

the Renaissance,<sup>46</sup> strengthened the connection between poetry and philosophy while drawing on Cicero's *De inventione* and *Topica*, as well as Aristotle's *Topics* and the works of Themistius. Although some poetry—whose Muses were derisively described as 'scenicas meretriculas'—offered only the goads and disappointments of worldly passions and deserved to be dismissed accordingly, there was another form of poetry—whose Muses belonged to Lady Philosophy—which could serve as the handmaiden of reason and the mouthpiece of truth.<sup>47</sup> Writing some two centuries earlier than Boethius, Lactantius—who is often described as 'the Christian Cicero' and who had a marked impact on the emergence of Christian humanism from late fourteenth century<sup>48</sup>—rejected the idea that philosophy could lead to truth, but argued that in combining the 'force of divine truth with the power of Academic eloquence', the Christian orator, 'having dispelled and refuted public errors [could] introduce among the human race a brilliant light'.<sup>49</sup> Unique amongst the Church Fathers for preserving—and even strengthening—Cicero's scepticism, Lactantius contended that the orator was obliged not merely to cling to the truth revealed in Scripture, but also to cultivate a deep knowledge of those philosophical schools whose falsehoods he wished to defeat. Able to argue from all perspectives, he would catch his enemies in the inconsistencies and contradictions of their own arguments, and could thus tease out the truth.

St. Augustine, however, is worthy of particular note. It is, indeed, difficult to underestimate the importance of Augustine's contribution to the evolution of Christian eloquence, and it is not without justification that Charles Sears Baldwin argued that Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* 'begins rhetoric anew'.<sup>50</sup> Exerting a powerful influence on Christian approaches to literature and on medieval homiletics, to mention only two fields out of many, the *De doctrina christiana* was, as James Murphy has

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<sup>46</sup> L. Panizza, 'Italian humanists and Boethius: was Philosophy for or against Poetry?' in *New Perspectives on Renaissance Thought: essays in the history of science, education and philosophy in memory of Charles B. Schmitt*, ed. J. Henry and S. Hutton (London, 1990), 48–67.

<sup>47</sup> Boethius, *De cons. phil.* I p. 1. I follow Panizza, 'Italian humanists and Boethius,' 49–50 n. 4 in disputing the view that Lady Philosophy dismisses poetry *tout court*.

<sup>48</sup> For Lactantius' reception in late antiquity, see Jerome, *Ep.* lviii, 10 and Consentius' letters to Augustine in 419, on the latter of which, for example, C. E. Quillen, 'Consentius as a Reader of Augustine's *Confessions*,' *Revue des études augustinienes* 37 (1992): 87–109; eadem, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 35–9, 51–63. For an introduction to Lactantius in the Renaissance see Panizza, 'Lorenzo Valla's *De vero falsoque bono*'.

<sup>49</sup> Panizza, 'Lorenzo Valla's *De vero falsoque bono*,' 86.

<sup>50</sup> Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic*, 51.

observed, 'copied or quoted by such writers as Rabanus Maurus in the ninth century, Alain de Lille in the twelfth, Humbert of Romans in the thirteenth, and Robert of Basevorn in the fourteenth.'<sup>51</sup>

The significance of the *De doctrina christiana* rests principally on its adaptation of Ciceronian rhetorical theory to a Christian purpose, and the work has its roots in St. Augustine's background as a *rhetor*. Having received a thorough grounding in the subject as a young man in North Africa, Augustine himself ultimately became a professor of rhetoric in Milan after teaching in Thagaste, Carthage, and Rome.<sup>52</sup> On the eve of his conversion, he was truly a *vir eloquentissimus*, and in his training, Cicero undoubtedly exerted the dominant influence.<sup>53</sup> As Joseph Mazzeo has observed, 'St. Augustine always remained under the influence of Cicero and treated all of the basic problems of rhetoric in Ciceronian terms, although he freely adapted his source to Platonic and Christian contexts.'<sup>54</sup>

In the *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine explained how the teachings of the Bible could be apprehended and communicated to others,<sup>55</sup> and Cicero's influence—alongside that of Scripture itself—is pervasive.<sup>56</sup> Having examined how meaning is to be recovered from 'signs' in the first three books, Augustine turned in the fourth book to explain how that which had been discovered could be taught to others. In explaining the rules and types of rhetoric, Augustine adapted Cicero to Christian homiletics, but in emphasising the importance of *ethos*—the moral life of the orator—in convincing listeners, introduced a new element into the Ciceronian tradition which went far beyond the sense of Quintilian's *vir bonus* and which was inspired by Christian Neo-Platonism.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 47.

<sup>52</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 23–9, 43–61.

<sup>53</sup> Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, 47–83.

<sup>54</sup> Mazzeo, 'St. Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence,' 176.

<sup>55</sup> For a useful introduction to the *De doctrina christiana*, see Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 56–63. On Augustine's rhetorical theory more generally, see also, for example, J. J. Murphy, 'Saint Augustine and the Debate about a Christian Rhetoric,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 46 (1960): 400–10; Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric*, ch. 2; F. Jansen, 'St. Augustin et la rhétorique,' *Nouvelle revue théologique* (1930): 280–97; J. Oroz, 'El "De doctrina christiana" o la retórica cristiana,' *Estudios clásicos* 3 (1956): 452–9.

<sup>56</sup> J. B. Eskridge, *The Influence of Cicero upon Augustine in the Development of His Oratorical Theory for the Training of the Ecclesiastical Orator* (Chicago, 1912); Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, 47–83; J. G. Jiménez, 'La Retórica de San Agustín y su patrimonio clásico,' *La Ciudad de Dios* 178 (1955): 11–32; R. P. H. Green, 'Introduction' to Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green, (Oxford, 1997), vii–xxiii, here vii–viii. Quotations from the *De doctrina christiana* in this chapter will refer to this translation, which will hereafter be designated as 'Green'.

<sup>57</sup> Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, 521–31.

Petrarch knew of a number of the traditions which drew most assiduously—if selectively—from Cicero's rhetorical treatises for inspiration. There is, indeed, much evidence to suggest that he was conscious of the extent to which later writers appropriated aspects of Cicero's thought for their own purpose, and approved the products of this intellectual parasitism, especially those texts which—tellingly—emphasise the moral condition of the orator and the rational pursuit of *felicitas* in approaching eloquence. In a series of marginal comments in his incomplete copy of the *Institutio oratoria* (Paris BN Lat 7720), for example, it is evident that Petrarch paid close attention to Quintilian's relationship to Cicero,<sup>58</sup> and in a fanciful letter written on 7 December 1350, his awareness of the nature of this relationship is made plain. While Cicero's achievement was in no way to be deprecated, Petrarch argued that it was Quintilian who should be seen as having led oratory 'ad supremam eloquii arcem', and viewed almost as a fulfilment of the ideal towards which Cicero had pointed.<sup>59</sup> As the survival of his manuscript copy of Cassiodorus' *Liber saeculorum litterarum* suggests, his understanding of late antique rhetoric was no less developed.<sup>60</sup> In the *Invective contra medicum*, Petrarch appealed to Boethius and Lactantius as authorities for his identification of poetry with philosophy,<sup>61</sup> and recognised that Augustine had benefited significantly from having studied Cicero's treatises on oratory during his time as a teacher of rhetoric.<sup>62</sup> Petrarch had, of course, read Augustine's

<sup>58</sup> For Petrarch's knowledge of Quintilian, see de Nohac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, 2: 83–93. In Paris BN Lat 7720, it is worth noting that Petrarch remarks on Quintilian's proximity to ('Laus ingens et vera M. Tullii Ciceronis' f. 88, *Inst. Orat.* X, i, 108) and divergence from Cicero ('Modeste admodum a Cicerone dissentit,' f. 106v, *Inst. Orat.* XI, iii, 123), and urges himself to remember various comments in which Quintilian seems to cite, praise or refer to Cicero directly (e.g. f. 88, *Inst. Orat.* X, i, 211; f. 95v, *Inst. Orat.* X, vii, 28; f. 110v, *Inst. Orat.* XII, i, 20). For a detailed discussion of Petrarch's immediate reaction to Quintilian, see M. Accame Lanzilotta, 'Le postille del Petrarca a Quintiliano (Cod. Parigino lat 7720),' *Quaderni petrarcheschi*, 5 (1988): 1–201.

<sup>59</sup> *Fam.* XXIV, 7, 4: 'Ille enim suum oratorem per ardua causarum ac summos eloquentie vertices agit et iudicialibus bellis ad victoriam format; tu longius repetens, oratorem tuum per omnes longe vie flexus ac latebras ab ipsis incunabulis ad supremam eloquii arcem ducis; placet, delectat et mirari cogit; eo namque aspirantibus nichil utilius. Ciceroniana claritas provectoris illuminat et celsum validis iter signat, tua sedulitas ipsos quoque fovet invalidos et optima nutrix ingeniorum, lacte humili teneram pascit infantiam.' Note also *Fam.* I, 8, 13–15; XVIII, 14, 11; XXIV, 2, 10; *Sen.* XVI, 1, 2; *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 3; *P I*, iv; *Prose*, 336.

<sup>60</sup> q.v. de Nohac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, 1:205.

<sup>61</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, I, 33–4 (Boethius); I, 36 (Lactantius); III, 117 (Boethius). There are, of course, numerous other allusions to Boethius—*De consolazione philosophiae* and *De Trinitate*—in Petrarch's writings, on which see de Nohac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, 2: 106–7.

<sup>62</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 126; *Fam.* XXIV, 6, 7.

*De doctrina christiana*, and both the *De civitate Dei* and the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* are cited as authorities in the discussion of obscurity in the *Invective contra medicum*.<sup>63</sup> A tantalising preliminary study of techniques employed in the *Invective* by Conrad Rawski even suggests that Petrarch consciously mimicked the rhetorical strategy which Augustine set out in the *De doctrina christiana*.<sup>64</sup> But his knowledge of post-Ciceronian rhetorical theory extended yet further. As Giuseppe Billanovich has shown, he was acquainted with the *Rhetores Latini Minores*—such as Fortunatianus and Victorinus—who combined the Ciceronian tradition with Greek elements, and was no less well versed in other texts studied equally closely in the Middle Ages.<sup>65</sup> Although it is difficult to find direct evidence for his knowledge of specific medieval texts, it is apparent that, in addition to having mastered the techniques of classical eloquence and acquired a knowledge of early Christian rhetorical theory, Petrarch was also highly skilled in the *cursus*, which itself suggest a thorough grounding in the didactic works common to the grammar curriculum in the fourteenth century.<sup>66</sup>

Rather than there being a necessary tension between moral philosophy and a form of rhetoric modelled after Cicero, the use of post-Ciceronian rhetorical traditions would have allowed a more flexible union of eloquence and moral philosophy to have been offered. Instead of being obliged simply to turn away from espousing a definite ethical position on occasions, or being forced to erect poetry as a rival source of truth to philosophy, Petrarch had numerous precedents for the adaptation of Ciceronian precepts into the structure of rhetorical theories which were developed out of—rather than in opposition to—a

<sup>63</sup> Quillen, 'Plundering the Egyptians'; *Invective contra medicum*, III, 133, referring to Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, XI, 15; *En. in Psalmos*, cxxvi, 11; cxliv, 12. Conrad Rawski has demonstrated that the *Invective contra medicum* is based on a rhetorical strategy derived from Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. C. H. Rawski, 'Notes on the Rhetoric in Petrarch's *Invective contra medicum*,' in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later*, ed. Scaglione, 249–77.

<sup>64</sup> Rawski, 'Notes on the Rhetoric in Petrarch's *Invective contra medicum*'.

<sup>65</sup> G. Billanovich, 'Il Petrarca e i retori latini minori,' *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 5 (1962):103–64, republished in idem, *Petrarca e il Primo Umanesimo* (Padua, 1996), 297–361.

<sup>66</sup> Witt, *Footsteps*, 273, 509–14. For further details on Petrarch's use of the *cursus*, see, for example E. Raimondi, 'Correzioni medioevali, correzioni umanistiche e correzioni petrarchesche nella lettera VI del libro XVI delle *Familiars*,' *Studi petrarcheschi* 1 (1948): 125–33; G. Martellotti, 'Clausole e ritmi nella prosa narrative del Petrarca,' in idem, *Scritti petrarcheschi*, ed. M. Feo and S. Rizzo, (Padua, 1983), 207–19; on the grammar curriculum see, for example, G. Billanovich, 'L'insegnamento della grammatica e della retorica nell'università italiane tra Petrarca e Guarino,' in *The Universities in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. J. Ijsewijn and J. Paquet (Leuven, 1978), 365–80.

desire to harmonise the personal apprehension of truth and the exposition of a specific form of virtue, and of these potential precedents, St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* stands head and shoulders above others.

The fact that methodological questions may be raised about the idea of 'tension' and that Petrarch both knew and approved of a multiplicity of post-Ciceronian rhetorical treatises, however, is in itself insufficient to support the suggestion either that he saw eloquence and moral philosophy to be in harmony, or that he drew inspiration from any of the many late antique and medieval texts available to him, including the *De doctrina christiana*. Although Petrarch was conscious of a number of rhetorical writings which propounded a closer relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy, and was aware of the possibility of integrating elements of Ciceronian rhetoric into a notion of oratory in which such an affinity was of central importance (such as that propounded by St. Augustine), a much closer analysis of his understanding of this question is necessary before any firm conclusions can be drawn.

In what follows, a revised understanding of Petrarch's approach to the relationship between eloquence and philosophy will be offered, distinguishing clearly between different phases in the development of his thought, and paying particularly close attention to sources including the *Africa*, the Coronation Oration, *Fam. X, 4*, the *Invective contra medicum*, and the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*. On the basis of this reading of Petrarch's rhetorical theory, the analysis will turn to evaluate the imputation of Ciceronianism, and will examine the possible influence of post-Ciceronian rhetorical theory on salient features of his thought. While numerous parallels with classical and post-classical rhetorical theory will be identified, it will be argued that St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* stands out as the most likely source for the harmonious relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy which Petrarch envisaged. With this in mind, Petrarch's view of rhetoric will be placed in the broader context of his engagement with ethical questions. Finally, the implications of an 'Augustinian' reading of Petrarch rhetorical theory for his impact upon the evolution of later humanists' views of eloquence will be examined, with particular attention being devoted to Coluccio Salutati and Lorenzo Valla.



## 2. *Moral Philosophy and Eloquence: Discord or Harmony?*

Despite the questions which may be raised about their arguments, Seigel and Trinkaus are nevertheless quite correct to suggest that in considering the relationship between moral philosophy and eloquence, Petrarch was exercised by the interplay between the function, content and style appropriate to poetic composition, and its implications for the reading of poetry. Rather than being in tension, however, an examination of a broader base of evidence suggests that Petrarch saw moral philosophy and eloquence as enjoying a more harmonious association, in which the literary devices proper to poetry were employed in relation to a purpose and subject matter that overlapped significantly with moral philosophy.

Petrarch's thought on this subject appears to have undergone some development in the period between the composition of the *Africa* and the completion of the *Posteritati*, a point which has been overlooked in many studies.<sup>67</sup> Although it would perhaps be incautious to attempt a more precise dating, three rough phases seem to be evident in the evolution of his thought concerning eloquence: the first covering the period from early 1337 to late 1345; the second extending from 1347 to around 1351; and the third covering the years 1353 to 1366. While these phases of development merit close consideration, however, Petrarch's treatment of eloquence should not be thought of as having undergone any radical shifts: a common thread runs through each of these periods, and was amplified and elaborated rather than revised or distorted at each stage. Despite recognising that each could in its own way be perverted, Petrarch's explicit engagement with the relationship between moral philosophy and eloquence displays a consistent desire to present them as having a shared preoccupation with the truth. Apparently viewing moral philosophy as a subjective search for the truth, and poetic composition as a persuasive expression of the same truth, the stylistic devices appropriate to eloquence serve to distinguish the one from the other, and responded to the demands of changing audiences, but did not compromise the theoretical harmony of their relationship as long as each discipline was properly conducted. Looking at the same association from a different perspective, truth could either be accessed through the pursuit of true philosophy,

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<sup>67</sup> A rare, but tentative exception is B. Vickers, 'The recovery of rhetoric: Petrarch, Erasmus, Perelman,' *History of the Human Sciences* 3 (1990): 415–41, here 419–26. Vickers distinguishes merely between an 'early' and a 'late' Petrarch.



or apprehended by recovering the moral principles cloaked by poetic language.

This underlying consistency is to some degree masked by a certain linguistic inconsistency. In the same way as Petrarch was willing to use 'poesis' and 'eloquentia' as synonyms, a broad vocabulary was brought to bear on the relationship between moral philosophy and eloquence. Perhaps connected to the fact that he did not produce a single treatise on rhetoric and elaborated his thought in a piecemeal fashion,<sup>68</sup> he used a number of different terms—few of which are fully defined in their immediate context—to signal the connection he sought to draw. In some respects, this is in itself revealing. While in the *Posteritati*, Petrarch specifically referred to 'morem... philosophiam' and implicitly, if vaguely identifies this with 'sacris literis delectatus', he was equally apt to refer to 'moral philosophy' as the counterpart of 'physical philosophy', or to 'theologia', or merely to 'philosophia'. On other occasions, terms such as 'philosophia' and 'theologia' are discounted in favour of a more direct engagement with the language of *virtus* and its implied contrast with *voluptas*, or with the vocabulary of *veritas*. On yet further occasions, a mixed lexicon is employed. Of course, in light of the preceding analysis of the *Secretum*, it is somewhat tempting to see this linguistic ambiguity as a reflection of a willingness deliberately to exploit what may have been perceived as a common semantic space shared by these terms. While it would be incautious to make such an assumption, however, and it is necessary to acknowledge the exact terminology used in each context, it is equally reasonable to posit that lexical variation was itself a part of Petrarch's exploration of the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy, and that the vocabulary deployed cloaks, rather than compromises, his consistency.

The first phase in the evolution of Petrarch's treatment of eloquence (1337–late 1345) establishes a clear function for poetry, but partly as a consequence of his immediate literary objectives, it is connected rather vaguely with other fields of endeavour. In perhaps his first exploration of the theme in the *Africa*, Petrarch draws attention to the connection between poetry and a range of other disciplines, and, speaking specifically of poetic composition, indicates that the literary devices proper to that enterprise served to clothe the truths it took as its subject and shared with its analogues. Invited to speak by Scipio in the last book of the epic,

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<sup>68</sup> Vickers, 'The recovery of rhetoric,' 420.

Ennius moves from a mournful reflection on the condition of the eloquence of his day to an exploration of the nature and function of poetry. Rather than showing any concern for the approval of the crowd, he who is about to begin writing (*scripturum*) must first lay down ‘firmissima veri | fundamenta’ on which may then be built more elaborate literary designs.<sup>69</sup> Ennius then clarifies that

All such things  
as trials that history records, the ways  
of virtue, lessons taught by life,  
of Nature’s secrets—all such matters are  
a poet’s substance, not to be exposed  
as elsewhere, but to be disguised beneath  
a covering cloak, or better, a light veil  
which tricks the watcher’s eye and now conceals  
and now discloses underlying truth.<sup>70</sup>

The same view is expressed in the Coronation Oration and, playing on a latent parallelism between Ennius and Petrarch, the connection was probably deliberate.<sup>71</sup> Although poetry is distinguished by ‘obliquis figurationibus’, it nevertheless shares with other fields of endeavour an over-riding concern for the truth. Responding to the common belief that poetry deals only in fictions, Petrarch directly echoes Ennius’ words. ‘I could readily prove to you,’ he proclaimed,

that poets, under the veil of fictions, have set forth truths physical, moral, and historical—thus bearing out a statement I often make, that the difference between a poet on the one hand and a historian or a moral or physical

<sup>69</sup> *Africa*, IX, 89–93: ‘At nunc quod nostro poscis sermone doceri,  
Accipe quam brevibus. Non illa licentia vatum est  
Quam multis placuisse palam est...  
Scripturum icisse prius firmissima veri  
Fundamenta decet...’

<sup>70</sup> *Africa*, IX, 97–101: ‘... quicquid labor historiarum est  
Quicquid virtutum cultus documentaque vitae,  
Nature studium quicquid licuisse poetis  
Crede, sub ignoto tamen ut celentur amictu  
Nuda alibi et tenui frustrentur lumina velo’

Translation from *Petrarch’s Africa*, trans. T. G. Bergin and A. S. Wilson (New Haven and London, 1977), 226.

<sup>71</sup> Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas*, 27–8; W. Suerbaum, ‘Poeta laureatus et triumphans: Die Dichterkrönung Petrarca und sein Ennius-Bild,’ *Poetica* 5 (1972): 293–328; idem, ‘Ennius bei Petrarca. Betrachtungen zu literarischen Ennius-Blidern,’ in *Ennius*, Entretiens sur l’Antiquité Classique 17, (Geneva-Vandoeuven, 1972), 293–347; L. B. T. Houghton, ‘A Letter from Petrarch,’ in *Ennius Perennis: The Annals and Beyond*, ed. W. Fitzgerald and E. Gowers, PCPS supplement no. 31 (Cambridge, 2007), 145–58.

philosopher on the other is the same as the difference between a clouded sky and a clear sky, since in each case the same light exists in the object of vision, but is perceived in different degrees according to the capacity of the observers.<sup>72</sup>

As Lactantius had observed, the poet's task was to take real things and transform them using allegorical figures.<sup>73</sup>

Perhaps because of his concentration on composition rather than reading, Petrarch is comparatively reticent when it comes to explaining exactly what value accrued to the use of 'obliquis figurationibus', but a sense of his estimation of the merit of poetry emerges from tantalising reflections on allegory, history, and epideixis.<sup>74</sup> In the *Africa*, Ennius' literary relationship to Scipio is founded on the poet's capacity to 'proclaim the praise' of famous men so that he might 'sing their virtues'. The relationship between the celebration of virtue, the use of the allegorical devices appropriate to poetry, and events in the lives of famous men which is latent within this remark merits observation. Together with his statement of the nature of poetry, it appears that Ennius uses allegory to transform real occurrences into a form which will manifest and exemplify virtue to the reader. In the prohemium of the *De viris illustribus*, which was probably composed at a similar time, Petrarch expressed this point more directly.<sup>75</sup> Although his work necessarily took historical truths for its subject matter, his use of that material was determined by a desire to reveal to his reader the virtues to be followed and the vices to be avoided.<sup>76</sup> Poetry, which was in some ways defined by 'obliquis figurationibus', sought to communicate virtue by allegorising the deeds of famous men, or—we may presume—any other suitable subject connected with truth.

The issues first tentatively and generally touched upon in the *Africa*, the Coronation Oration, and the *De viris illustribus* were addressed with more clarity during the second phase of Petrarch's thought (1347–c.1351).

<sup>72</sup> Translation from E. H. Wilkins, 'Petrarch's Coronation Oration,' *PMLA* 68/5 (Dec. 1953): 1241–50, here 1246. The Latin text for the Coronation Oration can be found in C. Godi, 'La "collatio laureationis" del Petrarca,' *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica* 13 (1970): 1–27. For a brief discussion of the parallelism of the Coronation Oration and *Africa*, IX, see Bernardo, *Petrarch, Scipio and the "Africa"*, 6–12.

<sup>73</sup> Wilkins, 'Petrarch's Coronation Oration,' 1246.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> See B. G. Kohl, 'Petrarch's Prefaces to *De viris illustribus*,' *History and Theory* 13/2 (May 1974): 132–44. On the composition of the *De viris illustribus*, and of the prohemium in particular, see, for example, G. Martellotti, 'Il *De viris illustribus*. Modi e tempi della composizione,' in *De viris illustribus*, ed. G. Martellotti, Edizione Nazionale delle Opere di Francesco Petrarca (Florence, 1922), ix–xiv; idem, 'La Prefazione A,' in *ibid.*, cxxx–cxxxii.

<sup>76</sup> *De viris illustribus*, prohem., 6.

The broad brushstrokes with which he painted the relationship between poetry and other fields of endeavour were replaced with a more refined and precise manner. Whereas Petrarch had previously described poetry as a mode of writing which could be brought to bear on the truths revealed by a multiplicity of disciplines for the inferred purpose of communicating virtue, he began to adopt a more specific approach, presenting *poesis* more clearly as a τέχνη which could express philosophical and theological truths in a manner appropriate to stimulating virtue in the reader. In pursuit of this, virtue itself is identified more explicitly as a Christian quality, bound up with the love of God.

A particularly illustrative example of the greater precision and more explicitly Christian concern with which Petrarch treated problems connected with eloquence is provided by a letter written to his brother Gherardo on 2 December 1348. Intended as an introduction to and commentary on his first eclogue, this letter was designed to address the relationship between 'theologia' and 'poesis'. Framed by a comparison between Petrarch's enthusiasm for classical verse and his brother's monastic calling, it not merely casts light on his understanding of poetry's function, but also offers an insight into poetry's capacity to express theological truths through literary modes.

Extending some of the ideas explored in the *Africa* and the Coronation Oration, Petrarch suggests that, far from being in tension with theology, poetry is most properly a τέχνη used to express theological truths and praise pleasing to God. The language and allegorical devices intrinsic to poetry were themselves instituted for the pursuit of theological ends, and the history of humanity's longing for the divine illustrates that poetic modes were an intrinsic part of worship from the earliest days.

At the beginning of the letter, Petrarch recognises that on first inspection, Gherardo might not appreciate the eclogue he had received since he would be inclined to view it as discordant with his calling.<sup>77</sup> But Petrarch warned his brother not to judge hastily. Contrary to what Gherardo might think, poetry is not in fact opposed to theology.<sup>78</sup> Both come from God, and, by way of introduction, Petrarch points out that Christ himself spoke as a lion, as a lamb, and as a worm, and Scripture is riddled with allegorical language. What is this, he asks, if not poetry?<sup>79</sup> All people desire a

<sup>77</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 1.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 1–2.

knowledge of the divine, and hence Aristotle was able to say that the first theologians were poets.<sup>80</sup> This, Petrarch claims, is evident in the name 'poet' itself. There are many different interpretations of the origins of the term, but the etymology which he finds most probable reflects the close connection between speech and praise. In the distant past, Petrarch argues, men were crude and uncivilised, but they were nevertheless filled with a desire for truth, for a knowledge, and for an understanding, of the correct means of worship.<sup>81</sup> As a consequence, they constructed buildings for meditation, which they called temples, established sacred ministers, whom they called priests, and made magnificent statues, golden vases, marble tables, and purple mantles. So that these marks of honour should not be mute, it was seen that high-sounding words also pleased the divinity, that holy blandishments—far from the common way of speaking—would carry to the highest reaches, and that a certain rhythm would dispel weariness.<sup>82</sup> These words were not of a vulgar form, but crafted out of a new, artful, and exquisite variety. Since the Greek word 'poetes' (presumably meaning 'ποιητής') denotes both one who makes things and a writer, those who used this new form of words to honour the divine were called 'poets'.<sup>83</sup> This, Petrarch contends, is borne out by Suetonius, Marcus Varro, and Isidore of Seville, and is also reflected in the words of Moses, David, Solomon, Jeremiah, and Job.<sup>84</sup> Gherardo was also invited to consider the fact that Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome all made use of poetry and rhythm, while the writings of other holy men—such as Prudentius, Prosper, and Sedulius—were known only through their 'metrica . . . opuscula'.<sup>85</sup> He should not, therefore, regard with horror those things which he knew pleased men both holy and beloved of Christ. Gherardo should, Petrarch believed, concentrate on the meaning of particular works and, if they were true and wholesome, should embrace them regardless of the style.<sup>86</sup> Although Petrarch was careful not to go so far as to say that poetry was to be preferred over all else, he nevertheless felt that it was unnecessary

<sup>80</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 2, referring to Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 983 b 27.

<sup>81</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 3. For a discussion of this point in the context of the idea of the *poeta theologus*, see Witt, 'Coluccio Salutati and the Conception of the *Poeta Theologus*,' 542–3.

<sup>82</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 4.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*: 'Id sane non vulgari forma sed artificiosa quadam et exquisita et nova fieri oportuit, quae quoniam greco sermone 'poetes' dicta est, eos quoque qui hac utebantur, poetas dixerunt.'

<sup>84</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 5–6, referring to Isidore, *Etym.* 8, 7, 1–3.

<sup>85</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 8.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

to spurn it simply because it was in verse: to reject poetry without considering that its style cloaked its meaning was similar to the madness or hypocrisy of praising food that was served in an earthenware vessel while being revolted by the same dish presented on a golden platter.<sup>87</sup>

This serves as the basis for the following explanation of the first eclogue. Here, Petrarch is primarily concerned to offer a reading of the bucolic verse which stresses the parallelism of his own enthusiasm for classical verse (represented by Homer and Virgil) and Gherardo's religious vocation.<sup>88</sup> In not pursuing a religious life, Petrarch may have followed a more difficult path, but that is not to say that he was unable to access the truths of religion. Through his reading of verse, he was able to attain an understanding of virtue: contrary to expectations, the allegorical and historical modes of classical poetry allowed it to be read as a reflection of a specifically Christian virtue, and permitted Petrarch to draw valuable moral lessons from its stream.

Having pointed out that he is represented by Silvius and Gherardo by Monicus,<sup>89</sup> Petrarch makes it clear that the fact that the two shared a single mother is not an allegory, but the simple truth, just as they shared the same father.<sup>90</sup> While his brother was shut away in safety, far away from cities and men, however, Petrarch himself wandered uncertain and in error.<sup>91</sup> Accused by Monicus of seeking the inaccessible mountain peak which stands for the rare fame which few achieved, Silvius is delighted by the babbling spring which represents literature and eloquent men, and roams through the deserted places which stand for his studies, but which have been deserted by others either because they were abandoned out of a desire for profit or because they were felt to be hopeless as the result of a sluggishness of talent.<sup>92</sup> From these springs arise the streams of the various disciplines which run with a certain enchanting sound. The delicate sound which Silvius applauds is the chorus of studies, and the nymphs of the spring are the natural goddesses of human study.<sup>93</sup> Although Monicus invites him to cross his threshold, Silvius cannot do so: so, just as

<sup>87</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 9.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, J. Robbins, *Prodigal Son/Elder Brother: Interpretation and Alterity in Augustine, Petrarch, Kafka, Levinas* (Chicago, 1991), 59–60; Lokaj, *Petrarch, Ascent of Mount Ventoux*.

<sup>89</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 20.

<sup>90</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 22.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 23.

<sup>93</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 28.

Gherardo enticed him to enter the Carthusian monastery at Montrieux, Petrarch indicates that he could not.<sup>94</sup>

The distinction between the two is important for their relative appreciation of poetry. As Petrarch explains, Monicus attempted to entice Silvius to enter his cavern in the eclogue by claiming that there he will hear a sweeter song than that sung by the two shepherds whose charms have captivated him.<sup>95</sup> Rather than revealing the name of the shepherd who sings so sweetly, Monicus describes his fatherland, mentioning first two rivers with a single source in error, and then one river with two sources, both located in Asia.<sup>96</sup> Recognising the single river from the description, Silvius demonstrates his knowledge by calling to mind the fact that it was in that river that a certain shaggy shepherd bathed Apollo.<sup>97</sup> Monicus responds by saying that it was there that his shepherd was born and, as Petrarch reiterates, the two figures then heap praise on their respective shepherds.<sup>98</sup>

The shepherds whom Silvius admires, Petrarch explains, are Virgil and Homer, while the shepherd whose song Monicus prefers is David, author of the psalms. Although Monicus' first reference to the two rivers springing from a single source denotes the Tigris and the Eurphrates, his second—correct—reference to the one river coming from two sources is the Jordan, in Judea, which is fed by the Jor and the Dan.<sup>99</sup> It was in this river, Petrarch reminds Gherardo, that Christ was baptised by John the Baptist, and this fact is reflected in the allegorical words of the eclogue. The shaggy boy of the eclogue stands for John, while Petrarch used Apollo to symbolise Christ, 'true God and true son of God'.<sup>100</sup> The choice of Apollo as a symbol for Christ is significant in that it allows Petrarch to connect poetry written after classical modes with the central precepts of Christianity, in defiance of his brother's views. Petrarch carefully underscores this point by explaining that he described Apollo—the god of poetry—as the 'god of the intellect and wisdom, since, as noted in the works of the theologians, the wisdom attributed to the collective and individual persons of the Trinity is attributed to the Son and is the same wisdom as that of the Father.'<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 16.

<sup>96</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 17.

<sup>97</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 18.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 29.

<sup>100</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 30.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.



The Jordan was thus not merely indicative of David's fatherland, but also denoted the river in which Christ was baptised, and, by implication, the river in which poetry was allegorically bathed in the waters of Christianity. In David's harsh-sounding words is revealed the use of history and allegory, but—despite Monicus' defence of the language of Scripture<sup>102</sup>—the same devices are employed in classical verse, which points to the same truths, and which Petrarch prefers.<sup>103</sup> The deeds of Scipio Africanus are highlighted in this regard, and tales of the Roman general are held up as evidencing a divinely instituted virtue. This young man, Petrarch points out, is called heavenly whether because of the heroic virtue which flourished greatly—the virtue which was called blazing by Virgil, fiery by Lucan—in him, or because of the view that he had heavenly origins, which caused the Romans to admire him greatly.<sup>104</sup> Despite their paganism—which seems to be recognised implicitly—classical poets and figures from the ancient past could, Petrarch suggests, nevertheless prefigure Christian virtues and this assumption lay behind his own composition of the *Africa*.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, although he never says so explicitly, it might also be suggested that in making this case, Petrarch offers an allegorical reading of his first eclogue which itself indicates that a deep attachment to Christian virtue could be expressed by a verse composed under the influence of classical poetry. Regardless of Gherardo's initial prejudices, the technical devices appropriate to poetry found in the eclogue cloak a defence of theological truth.

In attempting to defend his enthusiasm for poetry and in highlighting the compatibility of *theologia* and *poesis*, Petrarch's letter to Gherardo suggests that allegory allowed verse to be read in a manner which allowed theological truths to be accessed and an understanding of virtue acquired. The idea that eloquence was a *τέχνη* which could be used to give expression to Christian truths for the moral benefit of the reader was explored further in a letter written to Tommaso da Messina on 1 May 1350/1. Conceived as part of a short and thematically-linked epistolary series, the letter is an attempt to establish the importance of the study of eloquence. Adopting a different approach to that he employed in writing to Gherardo, Petrarch avoids discussing how he himself had derived benefit from eloquent works, and defends erudite language from the perspective of inculcating

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<sup>102</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 32.

<sup>103</sup> Q.v. Bernardo, *Petrarch, Laura and the Triumphs*, 81–2.

<sup>104</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 33.

<sup>105</sup> *Fam.* X, 4, 34.

virtue in others. Unlike *Fam. X*, 4, there is little reference to allegory, and Petrarch instead treats eloquence as the art of language itself, considered largely in contrast to action. There is a specifically Christian flavour to his conclusion and, just as in his earlier epistle, he suggests that eloquence is erected on the basis of a proper understanding of moral philosophy and has as its purpose the stimulation of a love of God in other people. Having established that his enthusiasm for classical verse had allowed him to access Christian truths despite wandering in error in the world in his letter to Gherardo, Petrarch goes on to indicate that the orator's personal apprehension of virtue was the necessary predicate of his ability to use eloquent language to urge putative readers to derive the same benefits.

Quoting from Virgil in the first sentence, Petrarch notes that if one wishes to 'rise from the earth and fly on the lips of men', it is necessary to foster both the philosopher's concern for the soul and the orator's erudition of language.<sup>106</sup> Just as eloquence must be studied when the mind has been cultivated, Petrarch explains that there can be no value in speech unless the mind has a certain dignity.<sup>107</sup> The importance of this point, however, lies in the reasons for which the condition of the mind should be nurtured and for which the powers of speech should be developed. The connection between the two hinges on the relationship between the self and others. 'For if [the study of eloquence] were unnecessary for us,' Petrarch claimed,

and the mind, relying on its own strength and unravelling its benefits in silence, did not require the support of words, labour would nevertheless be necessary for the rest of those with whom we live.<sup>108</sup>

If, in other words, a man such as Tommaso were able to nurture virtue in his own mind without the need for external assistance, he would still need to develop the skills of the orator so that others may benefit. The capacity of eloquence to move others to virtue appears to be motivated by and predicated upon the orator's personal apprehension of virtue.

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<sup>106</sup> *Fam. I*, 9, 1: 'Animi cura philosophum querit, eruditio lingue oratoris est propria; neutra nobis negligenda, si nos, ut aiunt, humo tollere et per ora virum volitare propositum est,' quoting Virgil, *Georg.* III, 9. Note that, in addition to adapting the word order, Petrarch omits Virgil's 'victorque', which perhaps lends the allusion the greater sense of humility appropriate to the 'animi cura'.

<sup>107</sup> *Fam. I*, 9, 2.

<sup>108</sup> *Fam. I*, 9, 4: 'Que si nobis necessaria non foret et mens, suis viribus nisa bonaque sua in silentio explicans, verborum suffragiis non egeret, ad ceterorum saltem utilitatem, quibuscum vivimus, laborandum erat...'

Just as eloquent composition seems directed at instilling virtue, so the reading of an eloquently written text is presented as an activity which allows for the recovery of a potentially fruitful understanding of the good. Tommaso, of course, could object that actions proverbially speak louder than words, and that, provided with 'nostre virtutis exempla', people may be seized by the desire to imitate.<sup>109</sup> Although he does not deny this, however, Petrarch indicates that eloquence nevertheless offers great assistance. There are many men who, though unaffected by the writings of the past, may suddenly be awoken to the delights of virtue by the words of others.<sup>110</sup> For this reason, the pursuit of eloquence has an unendingly important role: thousands of years may pass by and still 'ad amorem Dei, ad odium voluptatum precepta' will never suffice.<sup>111</sup> The language here is significant. Prefiguring the rhetorical theory of the later Renaissance, Petrarch defines the function of eloquence in terms of a desire to pursue virtue (*virtus*) and avoid vice (*voluptas*), each conceived of in relation to the love of God. As a manner of speaking or writing in a manner appropriate to a given audience, eloquence appears as a means of expressing to others the results of Petrarch's private search for the truths of moral philosophy.

The impression that eloquence proceeds from a personal understanding of virtue, and is reliant on the pursuit of moral philosophy is the key feature of the third phase in the development of Petrarch's rhetorical theory (c.1353–c.1366), and is made explicit in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, begun only a few years after the composition of the letter to Tommaso da Messina. As in *Fam.* I, 9, Petrarch sustains the implication that the man who would be eloquent must cultivate both the philosopher's care for the soul and the orator's erudition. Developing the implications of the *Africa* and the Coronation Oration, however, it is suggested that elegant language must necessarily be erected on a solid apprehension of virtue, and in this, the character and learning of the orator play an important role.

<sup>109</sup> *Fam.* I, 9, 5: 'Instabis autem et dices: "Heu quantum et nobis tutius et illis efficacius fuerat suadere, ut eorum oculis nostre virtutis exempla preberemus, quorum illi pulchritudine delectati ad imitationis impetum raperentur! Natura enim hoc habet, ut multo melius multoque facilius factorum quam verborum stimulis excitemur perque hanc viam expeditius ad omnem virtutis altitudinem consurgamus.'

<sup>110</sup> *Fam.* I, 9, 6.

<sup>111</sup> *Fam.* I, 9, 9: 'Decem adhuc redeant annorum milia, secula seculis aggregentur: nunquam satis laudabitur virtus; nunquam ad amorem Dei, ad odium voluptatum precepta sufficient; nunquam acutis ingeniis iter obstruetur ad novarum rerum indaginem.'

Some years earlier, Petrarch had cautioned against engaging in public oratory without first having taken care of the condition of one's soul in the *De vita solitaria*. In its immediate context, this warning was intended to amplify the importance of cultivating virtue through solitude, but—alongside *Fam.* I, 9—it also represents an early expression of the connection between eloquence and a personal apprehension of the good. There are, Petrarch says, 'learned and eloquent men' who go about cities delivering speeches about virtue and vice, and apparently excoriating the life of the *occupatus*.<sup>112</sup> Although what they say may indeed be useful, they do not practice what they preach.<sup>113</sup> 'The doctor who helps the sick man with his advice, however, is not always healthy,' Petrarch contends, 'and he has often died of the same malady from which he had freed many others.'<sup>114</sup> While he certainly would not disdain carefully considered and artfully composed words designed for the benefit of the many, Petrarch believed that 'this is not a school of rhetoric, but of life.' Men should focus not on the 'empty glory of language, but on a genuine peace of mind.'<sup>115</sup> This serves as the prelude to a recommendation of a solitary life, but it also indicates the impossibility of separating eloquence and moral character. Regardless of how beneficial it might be for the listener, an oration delivered by a man who does not care for the condition of his own soul is the product of a desire for the 'empty glory of language'. By implication, Petrarch would prefer that an eloquent speech urge an audience to love virtue and spurn vice not merely by using artful forms of words, but also by reflecting the moral character of the orator himself.

This passage from the *De vita solitaria* speaks to a distinction between loquacity and eloquence, and it is precisely this topic to which Petrarch's interlocutors—Gaudium and Ratio—turn in *De remediis*, I, 9. Despite Gaudium's predictable enthusiasm, Ratio warns that eloquence

<sup>112</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii: 'Multi sunt qui occupationes in comune utile et solitudine qualibet santiores profitentur... Non inficior doctos quosdam et facundos viros, et qui multa subtiliter adversus hec disputent. Ceterum non de ingenio, sed de moribus est questio; ambiunt civitates, declamant in populis, multa de vitiis, multa de virtutibus loquuntur...' *Prose*, 322–4.

<sup>113</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii; *Prose*, 324.

<sup>114</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii: 'Sed non statim sanus est medicus, qui consilio egrum iuvat, quin eodem sepe morbo, quo multos liberaverat, interiit.' *Prose*, 324.

<sup>115</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii: 'Verba studio elaborata atque arte composita pro multorum salute non respuo et, quicunque sit opifex, utile opus amplector; verum hec nobis non rethorice scola sed vite est, nec inanem lingue gloriam, sed solidam quietem mentis intendimus.' *Prose*, 324.

has two sides. It is important, he counsels, to know how to use it.<sup>116</sup> Ineptly used, eloquence can be like a furiously flashing sword which is better sheathed and not used at all.<sup>117</sup> If the ‘fulgor eloquentie’ is to be glorious, however, it is necessary to temper it with holiness and wisdom.<sup>118</sup> Although the reasons for this are only gradually revealed, it serves as the starting point for fuller reflection on the moral foundations of rhetoric. Responding to Gaudium’s claim that eloquence alone is sufficient, Ratio asserts that where it is pursued to the exclusion of all else, especially wisdom, it is not eloquence, but loquacity.<sup>119</sup> ‘For it is impossible to be a true orator,’ he claims, ‘that is to say, a master of eloquence, unless one is a good man.’<sup>120</sup> This, indeed, was a view that both Cato and Cicero appear to have endorsed.<sup>121</sup> Without virtue and wisdom, it is not possible in giving praise to distinguish between the good and the bad, and hence impossible to exhort others to forsake vice.<sup>122</sup> Unless supported by an apprehension of virtue, the sweet and ornate nature of eloquent speech is neither compelling nor sincere, but more like a whore’s deceit or honeyed poison.<sup>123</sup> Hence, if anyone aspires to the title of ‘orator’ and to the true praise of eloquence, Ratio advises that it is first necessary for him to study virtue and wisdom.<sup>124</sup> With the benefit of virtue and wisdom, the good man will be able to discriminate between the vices which are to be excoriated and the virtues which are to be praised, and to know clearly how to deploy the literary devices appropriate to his eloquence. Provided that the orator is indeed a *vir bonus*, there is no sense in which literary style should conflict with the demands of moral philosophy.

### 3. *Lady Philosophy’s Muses and the Invective Contra Medicum*

In the most mature expression of his views, we have observed that Petrarch saw eloquence as a τέχνη, a mode of communication which could be deployed to express truth so that others might come to love the

<sup>116</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 9.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*: ‘Et lugubres comete et infesti gladii et hostiles galee fulgent. Ut fulgor eloquentie gloriosus sit, sanctitate et sapientia temperetur’.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*: ‘Verus enim orator, hoc est eloquentie magister, nisi vir bonus esse non potest.’

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

good. Making use of figurative devices, and especially allegory, its function was to persuade the reader, but was at the same time closely related to the virtue of the orator himself. While a man could be eloquent, but not good, the moral quality of a virtuous man informed his rhetoric and contributed to his capacity for persuasion more powerfully than the inculcation of any rules. Far from being in tension with philosophy, eloquence took the truths revealed through moral philosophy as its subject matter and, mediated by the personal understanding of the orator, conveyed them in an appropriate form.

This interpretation of Petrarch's understanding of the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy stands in stark contrast to the readings offered by Trinkaus and Seigel. Rather than being troubled by the possibility of an inconsistency arising from an underlying opposition, as Seigel has argued, Petrarch's presentation of eloquence as a τέχνη and attachment to a clear sense of truth underpinning philosophy allowed a harmonious association to be depicted. By the same token, as a τέχνη associated with specific literary devices deployed in a fashion appropriate to the subject, it is difficult to support the suggestion that eloquence was more exalted than philosophy.

The *Invective contra medicum* addresses many of the themes central to an understanding of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy, and, having been revised in 1355, dates from the final stage in the evolution of Petrarch's rhetorical thought. Enraged by Petrarch's advice to the pontiff, the anonymous papal physician had not merely attacked Petrarch for claiming to be a poet,<sup>125</sup> but had also asserted that rhetoric should be the handmaiden of medicine,<sup>126</sup> whose practitioners offered 'the fruits of good health' and were able to cure the body and the soul.<sup>127</sup> Apparently presenting himself as a philosopher,<sup>128</sup> the doctor had argued that since it revelled in obscurity<sup>129</sup> and falsehood,<sup>130</sup> poetry should be denounced,<sup>131</sup> and insinuatingly suggested a host of reasons why Petrarch might have offered

<sup>125</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 142; Marsh, 118.

<sup>126</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, I, 14; Marsh, 12.

<sup>127</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, I, 2: '... sanitatis fructum policitus...' Marsh, 2; *Invective contra medicum*, II, 53: 'Se his artibus armatum, non tantum corporis sed animi vitia curaturum.' Marsh, 40.

<sup>128</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, II, 52l Marsh, 40.

<sup>129</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 130; Marsh, 106.

<sup>130</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, I, 36; Marsh, 28.

<sup>131</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 105–6; Marsh, 84; see also the reference to Boethius, *De cons. phil.*, I, pr., 1 at *Invective contra medicum*, III, 118–9; Marsh, 94–6.

advice to the pope.<sup>132</sup> In responding to these charges, Petrarch offered both a scathing invective against the doctor and his profession,<sup>133</sup> and a staunch defence of poetry. As we have already noted, Trinkaus has argued that Petrarch upheld the view that medicine should be subordinated to rhetoric. Attacking the doctor for his love of dialectic, Trinkaus suggests that Petrarch substituted 'poetry as the true medium for philosophy and theology rather than the syllogistic demonstrations of dialectic used by the scholastics.'<sup>134</sup> Contrasting eloquence with the pedantry of the schoolmen, Trinkaus views the *Invective contra medicum* as evidence to support the contention that 'Petrarch...proposed that poetic theology and rhetoric, rather than philosophy, were the intellectual instruments and disciplines best fitted for the Christian goal of salvation and the cure of souls.'<sup>135</sup> That such a view challenges the apparently harmonious relationship between eloquence and philosophy previously observed need not be stressed: in Trinkaus' interpretation, the notion of eloquence as a τέχνη is subsumed by the perceived supremacy of rhetoric over philosophy.

There is, in part, much to recommend Trinkaus' reading of the *Invective contra medicum*, despite its apparent divergence from some of the evidence already examined. Responding to the doctor's charges, Petrarch consistently placed his concern for the cure of souls at the centre of consideration. Although Petrarch might have disagreed with the physician on many other points, they were apparently of one mind in regarding the salvation of souls as being of considerable importance in determining the role of eloquence. For the doctor, body and soul were intimately related, and hence could be healed together by a medical practitioner. Health in all its senses was a practical matter of 'things' which, it seems, were held to have little to do with the fictions and fluctuations of poetry.<sup>136</sup> Medicine was, as a result, superior to rhetoric. For Petrarch, however, eloquence was intended specifically for the cure of souls, while medicine concerned itself only with the body, and even then often ineffectually so. Just as

<sup>132</sup> E.g. *Invective contra medicum*, I, 6, 7.

<sup>133</sup> On Petrarch's attitude towards medicine in the *Invective contra medicum*, see G. Dell'Anna, 'Il Petrarca e la medicina,' in *Petrarca e la cultura europea*, ed. L. Rotondi Secchi Tarugi (Milan, 1997), 203–22; F. Bausi, 'Il "mechanicus" che scrive libri. Per un nuovo commento alle "Invective contra medicum" di Francesco Petrarca,' *Rinascimento* 42 (2002): 110–11; N. Streuver, 'Petrarch's *Invective Contra Medicum*: An Early Confrontation of Rhetoric and Medicine,' *MLN* 108/4 (Sept. 1992): 659–79.

<sup>134</sup> Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 96.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>136</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 113–15.



reason allows the rational soul to command the body, the arts invented for the sake of the soul command those invented for the body's sake.<sup>137</sup> As Trinkaus has argued, medicine was hence inferior to eloquence, since rhetoric alone addressed the health of the soul. Indeed, expressing the same point in a slightly different fashion, Petrarch claimed that rhetoric had as its ultimate purpose the education of men in living well, and, as a result, was entirely happy for his works to be described as homilies.<sup>138</sup>

Trinkaus is similarly correct to suggest that Petrarch regarded poetry as the 'true medium for philosophy and theology'. This is not, however, to say that poetry supplanted philosophy. Contrary to Trinkaus' assertion, Petrarch's definition of eloquence as a τέχνη allowed him to describe eloquence as a mode of expression applied to the truths of philosophy while also castigating the doctor's use of dialectic for its predisposition to unchristian error.

For Petrarch, the cure of souls through eloquence was possible only where rhetoric was related to an understanding of the truth. Rather than being a source of philosophical truth in itself, Petrarch argued that rhetoric was simply a means of approaching or expressing truth: it was, in other words, a means and not an end. In this respect, it was similar to a number of other fields of endeavour, a fact which the doctor appears to have missed. Eloquence, dialectic and grammar are alike, Petrarch claimed, in that 'they are a path, rather than a goal'.<sup>139</sup> None of these disciplines should be thought of as containing, or being equivalent to, philosophy. They are each routes to philosophy. If any one is pursued as an end in itself, confusion and error follow. So, in the doctor's case, in clinging to syllogisms so resolutely, he has failed to distinguish between true and false philosophy, and has been led to deny Christ by placing doctrines alongside one another indiscriminately.<sup>140</sup>

Philosophy, Petrarch claimed, is a tree with many branches, and so there are also many types of philosopher. There are true philosophers and

<sup>137</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 160; Marsh, 134.

<sup>138</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 146; Marsh, 122, quoting Isidore, *Etym.* 6.8.2. On the homily in medieval rhetoric, see H. Caplan, 'Classical Rhetoric and the Mediaeval Theory of Preaching,' *Classical Philology* 28/2 (April 1933): 73–96, here 87.

<sup>139</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, II, 83; 'Sed, o stulte, non hac careo: verum scio quid ei, quid ceteris liberalibus artibus dandum sit; didici a philosophis nullam earum valde suspicere. Equidem, ut eas didicisse laudabile, sic in eisdem senescere puerile est. Via sunt nempe, non terminus, nisi errantibus ac vagis quibus nullus est vite portus.' Marsh, 64–6.

<sup>140</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, II, 83–4; Marsh, 66; *Invective contra medicum*, II, 87; Marsh, 70.

false philosophers.<sup>141</sup> Some, like Epicurus and the Epicureans, are called philosophers, but are justly regarded as being tainted with infamy.<sup>142</sup> Others, like Jerome, Augustine, and the Doctors of the Church, are true philosophers since ‘there never was, and never could be any philosophy higher than the one leading to the truth,’ and in this regard, ‘our own Christian philosophers prominently surpassed the vigils and labours of all others’.<sup>143</sup> As Petrarch’s language and examples suggest, the true philosophy is unmistakably Christian and is bound up with the love of God. Sharpening his criticism of the doctor, Petrarch reminds him that Augustine, echoing Plato, had argued that ‘if wisdom is God, who created all things, as divine authority and truth have shown, then the true philosopher is one who loves God.’<sup>144</sup> The implications of this evoke the moral message of the *Secretum*. In order to love God, Petrarch indicates that the true philosopher must first reflect on his own mortality and spurn the physical world for the blessedness of the next life:

Now to meditate about death, to arm oneself against it, to prepare oneself to disdain and accept it, to meet it when necessary, and to exchange with sublime resolve this brief and wretched life for eternal life, for blessedness, and for glory—all these things are true philosophy, which has been simply described as the contemplation of death. Even though this definition was invented by pagans, it belongs to Christians. For they should despise the present life, and in their hope for eternal life, they should desire its dissolution.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>141</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 122; Marsh, 98.

<sup>142</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 121; Marsh, 98.

<sup>143</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 121: ‘Unde Paulus apostolus, verus Cristi philosophus, et post eum clarissimus eius interpret Augustinus, multique quos enumerare non est necesse, philosophiam laudatam ab aliis execrantur; cum tamen nulla unquam philosophia altior fuerit, aut esse possit, quam que ducit ad verum, qua nostri, celesti munere potius quam humano studio, ante omnium philosophorum vigilias ac labores eminentissime floruerunt.’ Marsh, 98; trans. Marsh, 99.

<sup>144</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, II, 96: ‘Porro enim,’ ut Platonem sequens ait Augustinus, ‘si sapientia Deus est per quem facta sunt omnia, sicut divina autoritas veritasque monstravit, verus philosophus est amator Dei,’” quoting Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, VIII, 1; Marsh, 76–8; trans. Marsh, 77–9.

<sup>145</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, II, 88: ‘Illam certe premeditari, contra illam armari, ad illius contemptum ac patientiam componi, illi si res exigit occurrere, et pro eterna vita, pro felicitate, pro gloria brevem hanc miseramque vitam alto animo pacisci, ea demum vera philosophia est, quam quidam nichil aliud nisi cogitationem mortis esse dixerunt. Que philosophie descriptio, quamvis a paganis inventa, Cristianorum tamen est propria, quibus et huius vite contemptus et spes eterne et dissolutionis desiderium esse debet,’ quoting Cicero, *Tusc.* I, xxx, 74 and referring to Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalion*, 2.1; Marsh, 70; trans. Marsh, 71.

Although rhetoric cannot be regarded as equivalent to philosophy any more than dialectic, eloquence may nevertheless be seen as philosophy's handmaiden. Despite the doctor's misinterpretation of the passage, Petrarch contends that this is evidenced by Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae*. Appearing before Boethius' literary *alter ego*, Lady Philosophy recommends 'her' Muses. There is no doubt in Petrarch's mind that these Muses belong to the poets, and that—as the possessive pronoun indicates—they serve the cause of philosophy, that is to say, the true philosophy.<sup>146</sup> Boethius' attack on the 'harlots of the stage' refers not to *all* poets (as the doctor appears to have believed), but merely to the 'so-called dramatic poets' whom practitioners of the poetic art revile with good reason.<sup>147</sup>

Evoking the sentiments of *Fam. X*, 4, Petrarch argues that neither Homer nor Virgil dedicated themselves to stage plays, but instead attempted to explain the 'nature of people and the world, the virtues, and human perfection'.<sup>148</sup> Although it is possible to find fault with some poetry, Homer and Virgil were concerned to communicate the truths of philosophy, and thus could not be criticised using the doctor's erroneous reading of Lady Philosophy's words in the *De consolazione philosophiae*. These truths are derived from God, yet He also grants to some the gift of poetic expression.<sup>149</sup> So, while the poets of antiquity may have been pagans, they were nevertheless also the unconscious recipients of this divine favour, and their works—as Petrarch had argued to Gherardo in explaining his first eclogue—contain elements of the truth expressed in an appropriate form.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>146</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 118–9; Marsh, 94–6, referring to Boethius, *De cons. phil.* I, pr., 1.

<sup>147</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 124: 'Sed ut, omissis aliis, ceptum sequar, in ultimo agmine poetarum quidam sunt quos scenicos vocant, ad quos pertinet illud Boetii, et quicquid a quolibet contra poetas vere dicitur; et hi quidem ipsos inter poetas contemnuntur, qui quales essent Plato ipse declaravit in sua *Republica*, quando eos censuit urbe pellendos. Ut enim constet non de omnibus eum sensisse, sed de scenicis tantum, ipsius Platonis ratio audienda est ab Augustino posita...' Marsh, 100, referring to Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, II, 14, which cites Plato, *Republic*, III, 398i; X, 607b.

<sup>148</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 125: 'Quando autem Homerus apud illos, quando Virgilius apud nos, aut alii illustres scenicis ludis operam dederunt? Profecto unquam, sed de virtutibus, de naturis hominum ac rerum omnium, atque omnino de perfectione humana, stilo mirabili et quem frustra tibi aperire moliar, tractaverunt.' Marsh, 102; trans. Marsh, 103.

<sup>149</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 126; Marsh, 102–4, quoting Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, xv, 27.

<sup>150</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 137; Marsh, 114, referring to Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, XVIII, 24.

Although poetry takes the truths of moral philosophy for its subject, it is—as Petrarch had previously suggested—nevertheless a τέχνη which aims at persuasion (πειθώ), and these characteristics are essential in understanding its capacity to mediate moral truths. Rather than recommending the view that Petrarch saw eloquence as superior to philosophy, this emphasis on figurative language only serves to highlight the manner in which poetry was able to work in harmony with philosophy, and to contribute to the salvation of souls. Quoting Cicero, Petrarch reminded the doctor that ‘the function of the rhetorical art is to speak aptly with a view to persuading, and its end is to persuade by one’s speech.’<sup>151</sup> Using Lactantius as an authority in the same manner as in the Coronation Oration, he further suggests that ‘the poet’s function consists in translating actual truths into different forms using indirect and figural language with a certain decorum.’<sup>152</sup> This use of figural language, however, may lead the critic to suggest that obscurity renders it unable to communicate such truths effectively, and the doctor was apparently not slow to make such an accusation.

Far from obscuring truth, Petrarch indicates that the technical aspects of poetry render it more powerful. In seeking to convey the precepts of true philosophy, poetry benefits from the use of literary devices in that the recovery of meaning is made more challenging and more rewarding. ‘Poetic style,’ Petrarch argued, ‘serves as a stimulus for more intense reflection and as an opportunity for nobler studies.’<sup>153</sup> This is evidenced by Scripture itself, and Trinkaus has correctly observed that Petrarch appears to adhere to Curtius’ notion of ‘biblical poetics’.<sup>154</sup> The Bible contains many passages which are obscure and perplexing, yet was nevertheless

<sup>151</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, II, 49: ‘Certe, quod scholis omnibus est notum, rethorice facultatis officium est “apposite dicere ad persuadendum, finis persuadere dictione”.’ quoting Cicero, *Inv. Ret.*, I, v, 6; Marsh, 38–9.

<sup>152</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, I, 36: ‘Audi ergo quid Lactantius, vir et poetarum et philosophorum notitia et ciceroniana facundia et, quod cuncta transcendit, catholica religione clarissimus, primo suarum *Institutionum* libro ait: “Nesciunt qui sit poetice licentie modus, quousque progredi fingendo liceat, cum officium poete in eo sit, ut que vera sunt in alia specie obliquis figurationibus cum decore aliquo conversa traducat; totum autem quod referas fingere, idest ineptum esse et mendacem potiusquam poetam.”’ quoting Lactantius, *Div. Inst.*, I, xi, 24–5; Marsh, 28.

<sup>153</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 132: ‘Quod, si forte stilus insuetis videatur occultior, non ea invidia est, sed intentioris animi stimulus, et exercitii nobilioris occasio.’ Marsh, 108.

<sup>154</sup> Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 102; cf. Curtius, *European Literature*, trans. Trask, 40f.

‘uttered by the same Spirit that created humankind and the world’.<sup>155</sup> Both St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great, Petrarch notes, saw that the apparent obscurity of Scripture has the advantage of permitting numerous interpretations and encouraging the reader to expend effort in studying the text.<sup>156</sup> So with poetry more generally, Petrarch wrote,

rather than begrudging those who can grasp our work, we offer them this pleasant labour in order to promote their enjoyment and recollection of it. For when we have acquired something with difficulty, we hold it more dear and retain it more diligently.<sup>157</sup>

As the handmaiden of philosophy, Petrarch suggested that poetry was able to communicate truths better using apparently ‘obscure’ devices. The harmony between eloquence and philosophy was preserved, while those features which most clearly distinguished poetry served to underscore its value to the education of the reader.

#### 4. *Aristotle’s Philosophy and Cicero’s Eloquence in the De Sui Ipsius et Multorum Ignorantia*

In the eyes of many scholars, the contention that Petrarch saw eloquence as superior to philosophy is most strongly supported by the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, which was finished in 1367 and which similarly comes from the final stage in the development of Petrarch’s rhetorical thought. Identifying an apparently voluntarist ethic in the invective, Gray, Trinkaus, and others have discerned an opposition between a rhetoric which activates the will and a philosophy which touches only the intellect. Composed in response to the charges of contemporary Aristotelians like the *Invective contra medicum*, the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* is interpreted as containing an unequivocal endorsement of eloquence as

<sup>155</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 132: ‘Quid sermo ipse divinus, quem et si valde oderis, tamen aperte calumniari propter metum incendii non audebis? Quam in mutis obscurus atque perplexus est! cum prolatus sit ab eo Spiritu qui homines ipsos mundumque creaverat, nedum, si vellet, et verba nova reperire, et repertis clarioribus uti posset?’ Marsh, 108.

<sup>156</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 132; quoting Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, XI, 15; *En. in Psalmos*, cxxvi, 11; cxlvi, 12; Gregory the Great, *Homilies on Ezekiel*, VI, 1; Marsh, 108–10.

<sup>157</sup> *Invective contra medicum*, III, 134: ‘Apud poetas igitur o nimium rudis, stili maiestas retinetur ac dignitas, nec capere valentibus invidetur, sed, dulci labore proposito, delectationi simul memorieque consulitur. Cariora sunt enim que cum difficultate quesivimus, accuratiusque servantur...’ Marsh, 110, amended.

a source of truth which implicitly contradicts the notion of rhetoric as a τέχνη in harmony with philosophy.

Unlike in the *Invective contra medicum*, the argument in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* revolves more closely around the weaknesses of Aristotle's philosophy as an ironical, but effective, means of dismissing both the charge of ignorance and the pretensions of Petrarch's four Venetian friends. In the fourth book, Petrarch offered a detailed explanation of the moral errors arising from their Aristotelianism. As we have seen in chapter one, Petrarch argued that while Aristotle may have expounded the nature of virtue admirably, he had failed to recognise the true happiness and had no comprehension of the one God. This contention serves as the focus of the subsequent discussion.

Having castigated Aristotle for his ignorance of the *vera felicitas*, Petrarch pre-empted any accusations of injustice by pointing out that he willingly levelled equally stinging criticisms against other august figures, and highlighted Cicero as a particularly illustrative example. In Cicero's works, Petrarch was always delighted to find 'the height of eloquence and a great abundance of eloquent language,' but was severely disappointed by the errors which he encountered.<sup>158</sup> '[C]oncerning religion in general and the gods in particular,' Petrarch explained, 'the more eloquently [Cicero] writes, the more vapid I find his old wives' tales about them.'<sup>159</sup> On occasions, it is true, Cicero could write like an Apostle in a manner pleasing to any Christian,<sup>160</sup> but, Petrarch felt, nevertheless returned to his errors like a dog to its vomit.<sup>161</sup> Although it was possible to adduce numerous examples of occasions on which Cicero pointed towards the conclusion that 'everything we see leads us to believe that God exists as the creator and ruler of the universe,'<sup>162</sup> Petrarch lamented the fact that he abandoned his

<sup>158</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 56: 'Adhuc tamen poetarum et philosophorum libros lego, Ciceronis ante alios, cuius apprime et ingenio et stilo semper ab adolescentia delectatus sum. Invenio eloquentie plurimum et verborum elegantium vim maximam.' Marsh, 272; trans. Marsh, 273.

<sup>159</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 56: 'Quod ad deos ipsos... quodque omnino ad religionem spectat, quo disertius dicitur, eo michi inanior est fabella...' Marsh, 272; trans. Marsh, 273.

<sup>160</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 60; Marsh, 274; *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 60–70; Marsh, 274–84.

<sup>161</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 75; Marsh, 288; cf. *Prov.* 26:11; *II Peter* 2:22.

<sup>162</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 70: '... quamvis et sepe alibi et illic presertim plurima studiose operosissima disputatione perstrinxerit, ad hunc ipsum finem, ut ex his omnibus que videmus, esse Deum et factorem et rectorem omnium cogitemus.' Marsh, 284.

near-Christian sentiments<sup>163</sup> for a deplorably pagan polytheism.<sup>164</sup> While they may not have matched Cicero's eloquence, the same—or worse—may be said of many others.<sup>165</sup> To Petrarch, the singular and unitary nature of the true God is manifestly obvious,<sup>166</sup> but yet the ancient writers wasted their rhetorical skill on the false doctrines of numerous gods.<sup>167</sup> Plato and his followers may be excused,<sup>168</sup> but Pythagoras' notion of metempsychosis,<sup>169</sup> and the idea of the existence of countless worlds put forward by Democritus and Epicurus<sup>170</sup> are used as examples of the false philosophies propounded in defiance of truth.

Petrarch's subsequent return to Aristotle's philosophy constitutes a continuation of the same theme. Rather than concentrating on their relative erudition, the comparison between Cicero and Aristotle concentrates on the content of their works. Notwithstanding his own limited understanding of Greek, Petrarch conceded that Aristotle's written style was supposed to have been 'sweet, copious, and ornate',<sup>171</sup> and—avoiding a potentially weak line of argument—implicitly juxtaposes his works with those of Cicero, which were occasionally capable of expressing truths pleasing to the Christian reader. Professing that he had read all of Aristotle's works on ethics, Petrarch sharpened the criticisms already made by distinguishing between knowledge and love, and between understanding and volition.<sup>172</sup> Petrarch did not deny that Aristotle could teach the nature of virtue, but contended that reading his works offered us

none of those exhortations, or only a very few, that goad and inflame our minds to love virtue and hate vice. Anyone looking for such exhortations will find them in our Latin authors, especially in Cicero and Seneca, and (surprisingly) in Horace, a poet coarse in style but very pleasant for his maxims.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>163</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 73; Marsh, 286.

<sup>164</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 75–6; Marsh, 288.

<sup>165</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 84; Marsh, 294.

<sup>166</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 80; Marsh, 292.

<sup>167</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 81ff; Marsh, 292ff.

<sup>168</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 87; Marsh, 296.

<sup>169</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 84; Marsh, 294.

<sup>170</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 86; Marsh, 296.

<sup>171</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 105: 'Equidem fateor me stilo viri illius, qualis est nobis, non admodum delectari, quamvis cum in sermone proprio et dulcem et copiosum et ornatum fuisse, Grecis testibus et Tullio autore, didicerim, ante quam ignorantie sententia condemnarer.' Referring to Cicero, *De oratore*, III, xxxv, 141; Marsh, 312.

<sup>172</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 107–8; Marsh, 314.

<sup>173</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 108: 'Docet ille, non infitior, quid est virtus; at stimulos ac verborum faces, quibus ad amorem virtutis vitii que odium mens urgetur atque



This led Petrarch to ask rhetorically what would be the value of knowing what virtue is if such knowledge does not make one love it, and this question serves as the immediate prelude to the treatment of will and intellect at IV, 111, discussed in a previous chapter.

Although Petrarch praised the written style of both Cicero and Aristotle, his comparison of the two was not intended either as a direct comment on eloquence or as an endorsement of the erudition of Cicero, Horace, and Seneca, but rather as a demonstration of the fact that without an understanding of the one God, Aristotle's analysis of virtue was incapable of urging the reader to love the good. Contrary to the interpretations offered by Gray and Trinkaus, Petrarch's remarks in this portion of the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* do not illustrate the superiority of eloquence over philosophy, or the association between rhetoric and *voluntas*, but instead underscore the essentially Christian characteristics of the true philosophy.

That is not, however, to say that the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* does not contain telling comment on the relationship between eloquence and philosophy, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, this is intimately related to Petrarch's discussion of literary style and philosophical merit in Cicero's writings. In castigating Aristotle's philosophy, Petrarch recommends the works of Cicero, Horace, and Seneca as aids to the cultivation of virtue, and highlights Cicero as being of particular value. While it is true that Petrarch praised his eloquence in the highest possible terms, it is not possible to infer from this that Cicero's erudition alone made his works useful to the Christian reader. Cicero's writing always displayed 'the height of eloquence and a great abundance of elegant language,' but yet Petrarch emphasised that this literary skill could be applied both to truth and to falsehood. In the same way as Horace was praised in spite of his 'coarse style', it seems that in recommending Cicero's works, Petrarch intended to distinguish between the style and content of the exhortations 'that goad and influence our minds to love virtue and hate vice'. Preserving the idea of eloquence as a τέχνη, Petrarch simultaneously points to its having a close relationship with the true philosophy to which Aristotle had been oblivious.

There was no doubt, of course, that Cicero was a pagan whom Petrarch could not regard as Christian even in part. Those works which reflected

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incenditur, lectio illa vel non habet, vel paucissimos habet. Quos qui querit, apud nostros, precipue Ciceronem atque Anneum, inveniet, et, quod quis mirabitur, apud Flaccum, poetam quidem stilo hispidum, sed sententiis periocundum.' Marsh, 314; trans. Marsh, 315.

his adherence to an ancient polytheism were, as we have seen, almost painful for Petrarch to read. Perhaps the unconscious recipient of God's grace, however, Cicero was nevertheless able to adduce arguments which could be seen to support the Christian faith. Despite Cicero's Stoic concentration on virtue as an end in itself, Petrarch was able to read his works almost teleologically, and saw that they contained a love for virtue which was of value to the Christian reader and which could not be found in Aristotle's *Ethics*. Explaining St. Augustine's acknowledgement of his debt to Cicero's *Hortensius*, Petrarch pointed out that

Although our ultimate goal does not lie in virtue, where the philosophers placed it, yet the straight path toward our goal passes through the virtues, and not through virtues that are merely known, I say, but loved. Thus, true moral philosophers and valuable teachers of virtues are those whose first and last purpose is to make their students and readers good. They not only teach the definitions of virtue and vice, haranguing us about virtue's splendour and vice's drabness. They also instil in our breasts both love and zeal for what is good, and hatred and abhorrence of evil.<sup>174</sup>

While Cicero remained in ignorance of the one God, Petrarch suggests that his celebration of virtue and condemnation of vice could, as a result of their congruence with the true faith, induce the reader to love the good. Indicating that virtue should not be idolised for its own sake, Petrarch saw that Cicero's love of virtue could be read as lying on the path to the end to which all Christians should aspire. It is this palpable love of virtue—not his erudition or elegance of language—which allowed Cicero to be counted amongst the 'true moral philosophers' and which appears to have underpinned Petrarch's recommendation of his works as aids to the cultivation of virtue.

Although cloaked by Petrarch's dominant invective concerns, and shrouded by his comparison of Aristotle and Cicero, the impression of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy which emerges from the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* is consonant with the mature expression of his views previously observed. Just as 'true moral philosophers' should aim 'to make their students and readers good', the texts of which

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<sup>174</sup> *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 110: 'Etsi enim non sit in virtute finis noster, ubi eum philosophi posuere, est tamen per virtutes iter rectum eo ubi finis est noster; per virtutes, inquam, non tantum cognitatas, sed dilectas. Hi sunt ergo veri philosophi morales et virtutum utiles magistri, quorum prima et ultima intentio est bonum facere auditorem ac lectorem, quique non solum docent quid est virtus aut vitium preclarumque illud, hoc fuscum nomen auribus instrepunt, sed rei optime amorem studiumque pessimeque rei odium fugamque pectoribus inserunt.' Marsh, 316–8; trans. Marsh, 317–9.

Petrarch spoke most highly of them as their object the inculcation of a love of virtue and a hatred of vice. They sought, in other words, to persuade their readers. Although not unconnected to the elegance of the language in which texts were written, this capacity for persuasion was not reliant solely on eloquence, but rested most firmly on the foundation of true philosophy. Christian truths—which had as their only object the one God, but which ‘passe[d] through the virtues’—were the proper subject of eloquence, and texts which contained such messages justly deserved reading, even if written by pagans who occasionally drifted into more treacherous waters. Although the true philosophy was its most proper subject, eloquence itself remained a τέχνη, a mode of expression capable of communicating either truth or falsehood. Rather than usurping its role, Petrarch saw that eloquence could work in harmony with philosophy, and held up Cicero as the acme of this principle. Despite being a pagan, Cicero had received both the gift of expression and the inspiration of the truth from God, and thus stood in stark contrast to Aristotle, whose works—although well enough written—lacked the necessary basis in truth.

##### 5. *Eloquence and Philosophy: the Sources of Petrarch's Thought*

Despite their instinctive appeal, the interpretations of Petrarch's rhetorical theory offered by Seigel and Trinkaus appear to merit revision. On closer analysis, the relationship between eloquence and philosophy in Petrarch's works seems to display none of the tension so critical to the most common readings of key texts. Rather than occupying a position of pre-eminence or offering superior access to moral truths, Petrarch saw eloquence as the natural partner of philosophy. Far from being an entirely separate field of endeavour pursued for its own end, eloquence was a τέχνη which allowed the virtuous orator or poet to communicate moral truths so that others might love the good.

While the notion of tension may require emendation, however, the suggestion that Petrarch's understanding of the connection between eloquence and philosophy was based on a Ciceronian model nevertheless retains a certain attractiveness. Although he was certainly aware of later traditions, Petrarch's treatment of eloquence and philosophy seems to have a strong parallel with arguments found in Cicero's rhetorical treatises, albeit not in the fashion envisaged by many of the interpretations discussed earlier in this chapter. Like Petrarch, Cicero saw an intimate connection between eloquence and philosophy, and demonstrated that

they could in many respects be regarded as co-dependent. In the *Orator*, for example, Cicero asserted that since the orator was required to speak in a wide range of circumstances and to a variety of different audiences, the study of philosophy was essential to the practice of eloquence.<sup>175</sup> In the *De oratore*, Crassus explains that if an orator was to speak 'de natura, de vitiis hominum, de cupiditatibus, de modo, de continentia, de dolore, de morte,' it was necessary for him to have the solid understanding of these concepts allowed by the study of philosophy.<sup>176</sup> Explaining this view more fully, Cicero's characters express the need for philosophical learning in terms of the obligations of persuasion. Since eloquence has the power of driving an audience forward in any direction, it must be combined with the personal integrity and wisdom which stem from philosophy; anyone without these will not be an orator, but a madman.<sup>177</sup>

Although they each saw a certain connection between eloquence and philosophy, however, the suggestion that Petrarch's understanding of the relationship was based primarily on a Ciceronian model is not as strong as may first be supposed. In several important respects, Petrarch's thought on this subject diverges from Cicero's rhetorical theory, and the appearance of similarity is undermined by deeper points of disagreement. Unlike Petrarch, Cicero's assertion of the co-dependence of eloquence and philosophy was derived from a belief that rhetoric should serve the good of the *res publica*. In the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Petrarch warned that 'eloquium torrens... et rapidum' should be set aside for the good of the *res publica*, but never developed the point further.<sup>178</sup> Indeed, this is the only mention of the *res publica* in relation to eloquence to be found in his works: in contrast to later admirers of his writing, Petrarch pointedly avoided ascribing a civic function to eloquence, and often scorned the use of oratorical skills for public functions, such as pleading cases in court.<sup>179</sup> Eloquence—connoting both poetry and prose—served only to make men love the good for the sake of their own moral standing and for the justified Christian glory of the orator. For Cicero, however, eloquence—understood merely in terms of its application to oratory—was to be

<sup>175</sup> Cicero, *Orator*, IV, 14.

<sup>176</sup> Cicero, *De oratore*, I, xv, 67.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, III, xiv, 55.

<sup>178</sup> *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 9: 'GAUDIUM: Eloquium torrens est et rapidum. RATIO: Haud inepte quidam stulti atque improbi eloquentiam furiosi gladio equiparant: utrumque enim reipublice expedit inermem.'

<sup>179</sup> *Sen.* XVIII, 1; *Fam.* XXIV, 3, 2–3. See chapter 4, above.

connected with philosophy because of the service that can be done for the *res publica*. Indeed, it is only because of the good which can accrue to the *res publica* that Cicero seemed to connect eloquence with wisdom at all. 'Wisdom without eloquence,' he wrote in the *De inventione*, 'does little to benefit states, but eloquence without wisdom does too much harm and is never advantageous.'<sup>180</sup>

As a result of their divergence over the end of eloquence, Cicero and Petrarch also differed over the meaning of the philosophy which is associated with eloquence, and over the role of truth. For Petrarch, the belief that eloquence should take the Christian truths of moral philosophy or theology for its subject was inextricably bound up with the suggestion that eloquence should aim to inculcate a love of the good in others. Although pagan authors like Cicero had expressed truth as a result of the action of grace, there was no doubt in Petrarch's mind that eloquence should be associated only with the one true philosophy which gave access to truth, and that other, 'false' philosophies should be repudiated. Despite Seigel's attempt to detect a faint trace of Academic scepticism in his works, the philosophy which Petrarch connects with eloquence has a singular and unmistakable identity. For Cicero, however, a sceptical approach was preferable precisely because of the orator's obligation to speak in a range of circumstances for the greater good of the *res publica*.<sup>181</sup> In the *De oratore*, Crassus argues that the orator's task is to convince, and points out that this requires him to examine the detail of whatever matter is being discussed.<sup>182</sup> Antonius, however, challenges this view, claiming that the orator is a specialist, and cannot hope to acquire the universal knowledge that he presumes Crassus has recommended.<sup>183</sup> In the second day's debate, Crassus affirms that the orator should be able to adopt any position in the hope of ultimately uncovering the truth. The notion that truth could be revealed from any perspective the orator might be obliged to adopt colours Cicero's understanding of the philosophical learning appropriate to the practice of eloquence. Surveying the various philosophical schools of antiquity while considering a rhetorical education, therefore,

<sup>180</sup> Cicero, *De inventione*, I, 1; Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 101; G. M. A. Grube, 'Educational, Rhetorical and Literary Theory in Cicero,' *Phoenix* 16 (1962): 234–57; A. Michel, *Rhétorique et philosophie chez Cicerón* (Paris, 1960), *passim*.

<sup>181</sup> On the role of truth in Cicero's understanding of philosophical learning, see, for example, A. Leupin, *Fiction and Incarnation. Rhetoric, Theology and Literature in the Middle Ages*, trans. D. Laatsch (Minneapolis and London, 2003), 1–10.

<sup>182</sup> Cicero, *De oratore*, I, xxxi, 138.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, I, xlvii, 205ff.

Crassus states that his object is not to discover which was the truest, but which was the most appropriate to the orator,<sup>184</sup> and, while advocating the necessity of a broad education, highlights Academic scepticism as being of particular value. As an ironist, Socrates is held up for particular praise, and Crassus lauds his capacity to speak from a range of different perspectives in the hope of uncovering the truth.<sup>185</sup>

Petrarch's distance from Cicero is further evidenced by his striking lack of interest in the technical aspects of eloquence and, especially in his later writings, by his prioritisation of the orator's own moral condition. It has been noted that in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Petrarch attached more importance to the cultivation of virtue than to the inculcation of rules in describing the education of the orator. Although this reflects his more general disinterest in the divisions of oratory and his preoccupation with the capacity of eloquence to communicate virtue, it constitutes a divergence from Cicero's rhetorical theory. While Cicero had stressed that it was necessary for the orator to be well-versed in the virtues,<sup>186</sup> Winterbottom has rightly observed that 'there is no doubt that [he] was not primarily concerned with the moral aspect.'<sup>187</sup> Throughout his works, Cicero devotes considerable time and energy to examining the technical dimensions of eloquence and the different types of oratory. Perhaps because his understanding of eloquence was founded on a notion of civic duty, Cicero seems—in direct contrast to Petrarch—to have believed that rhetorical rules were of more importance to the training of an orator than the development of personal virtue. Whereas for Cicero the application of eloquence allowed the assumption of virtue and required a thorough technical training, Petrarch held that although rules may be easily acquired through reading and imitation, virtue was hard-won and crucially important.

It cannot be denied that traces of Cicero's rhetorical theory can be found in Petrarch's works, and the impact of texts such as the *De oratore*, the *Orator*, and the *De inventione* can be observed in frequent quotations and moments of conceptual similarity. Cicero himself figures not merely as a textual authority to be cited with a certain reverence, but also as an occasional exemplar of the proper relationship between eloquence and

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., III, xvii, 64.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., III, xix, 72; Panizza, 'Lorenzo Valla's *De vero falsoque bono*,' 80; M. von Albrecht, *Cicero's Style. A Synopsis* (Leiden, 2003), 232–7.

<sup>186</sup> Cicero, *De oratore*, III, xiv, 55.

<sup>187</sup> Winterbottom, 'Quintilian and the *vir bonus*,' 90.

philosophy. Although Petrarch remained in dialogue with Cicero's rhetorical theory in describing this relationship, however, it does not seem justified to describe Petrarch's thought as having been based primarily on a Ciceronian model. Despite Cicero's importance as an authority, the conceptual similarities which can be observed with Petrarch's thought on this subject are not only superficial, but are also outweighed by the many differences which divide them.

If Petrarch cannot be said to have been a Ciceronian, that is not, however, to say that he did not make selective use of gnomic quotations and principles while drawing inspiration from other sources, and Cicero's decisive influence on later rhetorical traditions must be recognised in this regard. On the one hand, Cicero's association of rhetoric and philosophy played an important part in the shaping of late antique and Christian notions of eloquence, while on the other hand, the respects in which Petrarch seems to have diverged most significantly from a Ciceronian model reflect strands in the later use and development of Cicero's thought. While Petrarch may not have based his understanding of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy on a Ciceronian pattern, his thought evokes elements of later rhetorical traditions which drew succour from Cicero's treatises and which continued to view the *De oratore*, the *Orator*, and the *De inventione* as authoritative sources despite often challenging the ideas they contained.

Numerous parallels may be observed between Petrarch's works and post-Ciceronian rhetorical traditions. These parallels reflect both his capacity to reach beyond the confines of Cicero's thought and the breadth of his reading in rhetorical theory. Texts from the late Middle Ages have a place alongside those from antiquity in his treatment of eloquence, and Petrarch seems to have read many either teleologically or inventively. In some respects, Petrarch betrays the influence of comparatively recent strands of thought, and seems to show himself to have been capable of writing from within a distinctively medieval context. The use of 'eloquentia' to refer both to poetry and prose, for example, is characteristic of Petrarch's writings, but is unfamiliar to both classical and late antique thought. Comparing him to Lovato dei Lovati and Albertino Mussato, Witt has argued that Petrarch's conflation of prose and poetry shows him to have abandoned the association of poetry with the grammarian's art.<sup>188</sup> This is consonant with changes in conceptions of poetry since the twelfth

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<sup>188</sup> Witt, *Footsteps*, 243.



century, and constitutes a continuation of a medieval trend which, though ultimately based on Cicero's works, came to reject his more restricted understanding of eloquence. For figures such as Cassiodorus, 'poetry, considered as metric, was a part of grammar, while as a form of argument, it was a part of topic or dialectic';<sup>189</sup> by 1200, however, 'the art of poetry came to be considered ... not a branch of grammar, but alternately a kind of argumentation or persuasion ... and a form of composition.'<sup>190</sup>

In other respects, Petrarch's thought recalls traditions which developed in parallel to Cicero's rhetorical theory and which were of considerable influence during the later Middle Ages. The impact of these traditions can be glimpsed when looking at Petrarch's emphasis on truth and on the moral character of the orator. In suggesting that eloquence was a mode of communicating truth persuasively, he could draw on numerous sources for inspiration, and—despite the 'Christian Cicero's' sceptical methods—was able to quote Lactantius with particular effect. Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae*, however, seems to have been of especial importance to Petrarch, and his discussion of Lady Philosophy's Muses in the *Invective contra medicum* is both effective and textually accurate. Given the importance of Boethius' treatise during the later medieval period,<sup>191</sup> it would perhaps be unsurprising for Petrarch to have drawn inspiration from a work which was the object of intense study in the grammar curriculum.<sup>192</sup> Indeed, the intimate connection between eloquence and truth in Petrarch's thought seems to echo attempts—frequently inspired by Boethius—to counteract Aristotelian conceptions of rhetoric between the early twelfth and late thirteenth centuries. The disagreement between William of Conches and Hugh of St. Victor over the role of truth in the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy, to take one striking example, appears to recall elements of Petrarch's use of Boethius in the *Invective contra medicum*.<sup>193</sup> In his commentary on the *De consolazione philosophiae* (which was also one of the most widely-used glosses in fourteenth-century grammar education), William of Conches—like Petrarch—maintained that eloquence and philosophy were distinct

<sup>189</sup> McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages,' 28 n. 2.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 30–2.

<sup>192</sup> Black and Pomaro, *Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy*, 3–34.

<sup>193</sup> On this disagreement, see, for example, J. Taylor, 'Introduction', in *The Didascalion of Hugh of Saint Victor. A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, trans. J. Taylor (New York, 1961), 3–39, here 16–18.

enterprises which were nevertheless connected by their common relationship to truth.<sup>194</sup> Associating philosophy with wisdom, William held that while philosophy could be thought of as the knowledge of truth, eloquence was the knowledge of how to state truth appropriately.<sup>195</sup> A similar parallel can be found in the works of St. Bonaventure. In a manner which again recalls part of the argument of the *Invective contra medicum*, Bonaventure challenged St. Thomas Aquinas' view that rhetoric was a part of logic by arguing that it could instead be thought of as a form of truth which moves to love or hate, and which may be seen as an analogue, rather than a subordinate, of logic.<sup>196</sup>

Petrarch's contention that the moral character of the orator was of essential value to rhetoric does not have an immediate point of reference in Boethius or the tradition which he in part inspired, but does call to mind Quintilian's treatment of the 'vir bonus dicendi peritus' in the *Institutio oratoria*,<sup>197</sup> which was quoted with such approval in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*. Petrarch may not have reproduced the details of Quintilian's argument, and avoided defending moral character from a political or civic perspective,<sup>198</sup> but nevertheless replicated the importance he attached to the orator's virtue, and adapted it to a Christian context. This association between eloquence and moral character was assimilated by later readers of the *Institutio oratoria*, and, having read their works with care, it is not implausible to suggest that Petrarch may also have drawn strength from intellectual heirs of Quintilian such as Cassiodorus, Isidore of Seville, and Fortunatianus,<sup>199</sup> and was in this regard at least superficially consistent with

<sup>194</sup> C. Jourdain, 'Des commentaires inédits de Guillaume de Conches et de Nicolas Trivet sur la Consolation de la philosophie de Boèce,' *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Impériale et autres bibliothèques* 20 (1862): 40–82, here 72. For William of Conches' views on eloquence, see, for example J. Cadden, 'Science and Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: The Natural Philosophy of William of Conches,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56/1 (Jan., 1995): 1–24, and 10 with particular reference to Boethius, *De cons. phil.*, I, pr. 1; cf. Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalion*, II, 30; *The Didascalion of Hugh of Saint Victor*, trans. Taylor, 81–2. A further parallel could be drawn with John of Salisbury's struggle with the 'Cornificians', who had attacked the liberal arts, for which see, for example, John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, ed. J. B. Hall with K. S. B. Kealin-Rohan (Turnhout, 1991), I, i, 13.

<sup>195</sup> Jourdain, 'Des commentaires inédits de Guillaume de Conches', 72–3.

<sup>196</sup> Bonaventure, *De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam*, 4; quoted in McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages,' 24.

<sup>197</sup> Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.* XII, i, 1; cf. *Inst. Orat.* I, ii, 3.

<sup>198</sup> Winterbottom, 'Quintilian and the *vir bonus*'; Leupin, *Fiction and Incarnation*, 16.

<sup>199</sup> Note that Billanovich also draws attention to the similarity between Fortunatianus, *Ars. rhet.*, III, 2 and *Fam.* I, 1, 46; Billanovich, *Petrarca e il Primo Umanesimo*, 322–4.

a strand of rhetorical theory running from late antiquity to the Christian Middle Ages.

Notwithstanding the parallels which may be observed with Cicero's rhetorical treatises, Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, and the debates surrounding the role of rhetoric in the works of William of Conches and other medieval scholars, Petrarch's understanding of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy was informed most significantly by St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. Indeed, the respects in which Petrarch appears to have been closest to classical texts such as Cicero's *De oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, as well as those in which he appears to have differed most significantly from their arguments seem to correspond with Augustine's own attitude towards the rhetorical theory of antiquity, while the manner in which he evoked the spirit of medieval thought similarly dovetails with the use later scholars made of the *De doctrina christiana*.

That Augustine's treatise was a potentially attractive source for Petrarch's understanding of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy can be gauged from its object and influence. Begun in 395 (although not completed until 426/7), the *De doctrina christiana* was a product of Augustine's self-conscious need to bury himself in Scripture and communicate its message to others. Its concern is to explain, first, how one could teach oneself the truths of Christianity, and, second, how one could teach those same truths to a congregation.<sup>200</sup> Offering both an introduction to the interpretation of linguistic 'signs' and a treatment of rhetorical training, it is perhaps best seen as a guide for preaching.<sup>201</sup> As in so many of his other works, Augustine drew heavily on the corpus of classical literature, and, especially in regard to the forms of eloquence described in the later portions of the text, it reflects his early experience as a professor of rhetoric in Milan. Cicero's influence looms large, and there is much to lend credence to the view that Augustine appropriated Ciceronian rhetoric for Christian ends, although—as Henri-Irénée Marrou has suggested—it would be

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<sup>200</sup> Green, 'Introduction,' vii–viii.

<sup>201</sup> There is some disagreement about how best to encapsulate the *De doctrina christiana*, but the most prevalent interpretation regards it as an introduction to homiletics. See, for example, Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 2:565–69; C. Mohrmann, 'St. Augustine and the *Eloquentia*,' in *Etudes sur le latin des chrétiens*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1961), 1:351–70; Murphy, 'St. Augustine and the Debate about a Christian Rhetoric'. For the opposing view, according to which the *De doctrina christiana* is seen as a description of a specifically Christian culture, see, for example, Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, 380–5, 506.

quite wrong to view it as a mere enumeration of Ciceronian ideas.<sup>202</sup> This adaptation of Ciceronian rhetoric to Christian ends was in later centuries to be of considerable importance, and the *De doctrina christiana* was avidly read during the Middle Ages not merely as a guide to exegesis and homiletics, but also as a valuable link between Christian teaching and classical modes. In the last centuries of antiquity, for example, it was used by Cassiodorus and Isidore of Seville, and during the Carolingian Renaissance enjoyed great popularity among figures such as Angilbert of Corbie and Rabanus Maurus.<sup>203</sup> Similarly, Peter Abelard and Hugh of St. Victor in the twelfth, and Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century enthusiastically mined the work,<sup>204</sup> while in later centuries, the *De doctrina christiana* was of sufficient popularity amongst humanistically-inclined clergy that it was the first book of Augustine's to have been brought into print.<sup>205</sup>

Familiar with the *De doctrina christiana*,<sup>206</sup> Petrarch was certainly aware of Augustine's assimilation of classical thought, especially with regard to eloquence. As has already been observed in relation to the *Secretum*, and as Carol Quillen has noted,<sup>207</sup> Petrarch signalled his appreciation of Augustine's use of classical literature in a letter to Giacomo Colonna. Had Augustine not clung to ancient authors so readily, Petrarch asserted, he would never have drawn so much material from poets and philosophers, nor would he have 'embellished them with so many ornaments from the orators and historians.'<sup>208</sup> At a rhetorical as much as at a philosophical level, Petrarch was conscious that Augustine offered a bridge between classical and Christian writing, and constituted a precedent for the free adaptation of the literary devices and rhetorical theory of pagan authors to Christian purposes. Looking to the *De doctrina christiana* for inspiration, it would not merely have been consistent, but also almost natural for

<sup>202</sup> Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, 508–10, 520, 526.

<sup>203</sup> Green, 'Introduction,' xx–xxi.

<sup>204</sup> J. Wawrykow, 'Reflections on the Place of the *De doctrina christiana* in High Scholastic Discussions of Theology,' in *Reading and Wisdom*, ed. English, 99–125.

<sup>205</sup> J. Monfasani, 'The *De doctrina christiana* and Renaissance Rhetoric,' in *Reading and Wisdom*, ed. English, 172–88, here 172–3.

<sup>206</sup> Although it should be noted that Petrarch only seems to have quoted from it directly on one occasion. *Rerum memorandarum libri*, I, 25; for which see Gerosa, *Umanesimo cristiano del Petrarca*, 168, n. 61.

<sup>207</sup> Quillen, 'Plundering the Egyptians,' 154.

<sup>208</sup> *Fam.* II, 9, 8: '...itaque Augustinum et eius libros simulata quadam benivolentia complexum, re autem vera a poetis et philosophis non avelli. Quid autem inde divellerer, ubi ipsum Augustinum inherentem video? quod nisi ita esset, nunquam libros *De civitate Dei*, ut reliqua sileam, tanta philosophorum et poetarum calce fundaret, nunquam tantis oratorum ac historicorum coloribus exornaret.' Quillen, 'Plundering the Egyptians,' 154.

Petrarch to have referred frequently and openly to the rhetorical thought of Cicero and Quintilian, for example, and to have treated them as venerable authorities despite the divergence of his own thought from the conceptual structures supporting their works. Similarly, the use of the *De doctrina christiana* as a potential source would have offered numerous opportunities for exploring parallels with later authors whose works drew on Augustine's treatise in a comparable fashion.

The proximity of Petrarch's rhetorical thought to Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* is evident when one examines some of the key features of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy in the work of the former. Developing an association between eloquence and truth already explored in the Coronation Oration and the *Africa*, Petrarch had connected a personal apprehension of virtue with a need to communicate truth to others in his letter to Tommaso da Messina. As we have seen, he contended that the philosopher's concern for the soul should be married with the orator's erudition of language. In this, Petrarch indicates that eloquence should be regarded as a τέχνη which—although it could also express falsehood—should be deployed to educate others in virtue, teaching the good to be pursued and the evil to be avoided. Furthermore, in *Fam.* X, 4 and the *Invective contra medicum*, the literary devices which could be used to ornament such exhortations to virtue are implicitly paralleled with the recovery of Christian truths from Scriptural passages rich in allegorical language. This image of eloquence as a τέχνη used for Christian purposes, and founded upon a personal understanding of truth which could be recovered through reading echoes an identical belief underpinning Augustine's treatment of homiletic rhetoric in the *De doctrina christiana*. Indeed, it is perhaps with respect to the relationship between eloquence and truth that Augustine differs most significantly from his classical antecedents.

A comprehensively-conceived work, Augustine's treatise was intended to explain 'the process of discovering what we need to learn, and the process of presenting what we have learnt.'<sup>209</sup> An understanding of Christian principles derived from Scripture precedes, and is tied to, the exposition of those truths: for Augustine, a correct understanding of exegetical practices was the essential predicate of effective preaching. Acknowledging that Scripture consisted of complex 'signs' which must be correctly interpreted before the truth could be understood, Augustine dedicated

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<sup>209</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, I, 1; trans. Green, 8.

the second and third books of the *De doctrina christiana* to an explanation of how these signs should be approached. In the fourth book, Augustine turned to address the communication of truth and the connection between the forms of erudition proper to rhetoric and the truth recovered from Scripture. Teaching, he explained, had as its object the inculcation of a love of God and virtue, and employed eloquence as a τέχνη tied to a concrete understanding of the truth rather than as an end in itself.<sup>210</sup> Consisting of certain rules regarding the form of words, Augustine—like Petrarch—argued that eloquence could be used to commend both truth and falsehood,<sup>211</sup> but should be deployed in pursuit of the former rather than the latter. ‘Who,’ he asked, ‘could dare to maintain that truth, which depends on us for its defence, should stand unarmed against falsehood?’<sup>212</sup> Challenging those who espouse untruths, eloquence should be used to ‘communicate what is good and eradicate what is bad, and in this process of speaking must win over the antagonistic, rouse the apathetic, and make clear to those who are not conversant with the matter under discussion what they should expect.’<sup>213</sup> Theological truths were the proper subject matter of eloquence, but at the nexus of the relationship between the two lay a personal understanding of Christian truths. In describing this, Augustine remodelled Cicero’s assertion of the need for wisdom in a manner which chimes with Petrarch’s appropriation of Ciceronian notions in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*. ‘Even those who believed in teaching the art of rhetoric,’ Augustine wrote, ‘declared that wisdom without eloquence was of little value to society, but that eloquence without wisdom was generally speaking a great nuisance, and never beneficial.’<sup>214</sup> Rather than being related to any sense of civic duty or Stoic conception of the good, this wisdom was unambiguously Christian: ‘the wisdom of what a person says,’ Augustine explained, ‘is in direct proportion to his progress in learning the Holy Scriptures.’<sup>215</sup> The Scriptures, moreover, should not merely be understood, but taken to heart, and in the same way as in the *De vita solitaria*, Augustine argued that the moral life of the orator was of

<sup>210</sup> Although Marrou correctly points out that it would perhaps be more appropriate to describe Augustine’s ‘eloquentia’ as an *ars rhetorica*. Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, 519.

<sup>211</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, II, 132; IV, 4.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., IV, 4; Green, 101.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., IV, 14; Green, 103.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., IV, 18, referring to Cicero, *De inventione*, I, 1; Green, 104.

<sup>215</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 19; Green, 104; cf. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, XIV, 28. For further meanings attached to ‘sapientia’ in Augustine’s works, see Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, 564–9.

crucial importance to his use of eloquence, for while the wicked man might educate 'those who are eager to learn', 'he is useless to his own soul.'<sup>216</sup> The life of a good man could in a sense become a source of eloquence in itself.<sup>217</sup> It was, Augustine believed, possible to 'visualise it as wisdom proceeding from its own home (... a wise person's heart) and eloquence, like an ever-present slave, following on behind without ever having to be summoned.'<sup>218</sup>

Despite the absolute importance Augustine attached to the study of Scripture, he did not deny that the works of pagan authors could be of great use to a Christian orator seeking to communicate the truth. Classical literature would, he believed, repay the effort of reading, and contended that it could be of value to the Christian student not merely as an exemplar of rhetorical techniques, but also as a corpus containing laudable opinions. Although Augustine enthusiastically appropriated and adapted Cicero's treatment of the three functions of eloquence (to instruct, to delight, and to move),<sup>219</sup> and the three styles of rhetoric (restrained, mixed, and grand),<sup>220</sup> he shared Petrarch's un-classical disdain for the learning of rules.<sup>221</sup> The *De doctrina christiana* avoids the detailed discussion of rhetorical rules common to classical treatises,<sup>222</sup> and instead advises that 'given a sharp and eager mind, eloquence is picked up more readily by those who read and listen to the words of the eloquent than by those who follow the rules of eloquence.'<sup>223</sup> Classical works could be mined for valuable lessons, and this was as true of moral philosophy as of the details of rhetorical rules. Prefiguring Petrarch's defence of Cicero's works against the Aristotelianism of his four Venetian friends in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, and his recommendation of Virgil and Homer in *Fam. X*, 4, Augustine admitted that works by pagan authors contained much that was deplorable, but nevertheless recognised that by God's grace they also contained truths consonant with the Christian faith. 'Like the treasures of the ancient Egyptians,' Augustine wrote,

<sup>216</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 151, referring to *Eccles.* 37:2; Green, 142.

<sup>217</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 158.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 30; Green, 107.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 74, referring to Cicero, *De oratore*, 69; for which see Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, 510.

<sup>220</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 96, referring to Cicero, *Orator*, 101.

<sup>221</sup> Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, 519–20.

<sup>222</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 11, referring to Cicero, *De oratore*, I, lxxvii, 91.

<sup>223</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 8; Green, 102.



who possessed not only idols and heavy burdens, which the people of Israel hated and shunned, but also vessels and ornaments of silver and gold, and clothes, which on leaving Egypt the people of Israel, in order to make better use of them, surreptitiously claimed for themselves... similarly all the branches of pagan learning contain not only false and superstitious fantasies and burdensome studies that involve unnecessary effort, which each of us must loathe and avoid as under Christ's guidance we abandon the company of pagans, but also studies for liberated minds which are more appropriate to the service of the truth, and some very useful moral instruction, as well as various truths about monotheism to be found in their writers.<sup>224</sup>

It was their occasionally monotheistic content, rather than anything else, which formed the basis of Petrarch's defence of Cicero's works in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, and it is striking that, like Augustine, Petrarch anxiously excoriated those passages in which Cicero returned to his pagan tendencies.

Deriving divine truth from Scripture and valuable points concerning the rules of eloquence and monotheism from the works of pagan authors, it fell to the Christian orator to communicate a knowledge of and love for the good<sup>225</sup> by making clear to the reader what had previously been hidden from him.<sup>226</sup> Although he had little concern for formal rules, Augustine nevertheless held that this task necessarily obliged the preacher to make use of different rhetorical devices. It has already been observed that Augustine adapted Cicero's notion of the three forms of eloquence, but his sophisticated appreciation of biblical exegesis led him also to place emphasis on other techniques available to the orator. In a manner which recalls Petrarch's defence of allegorical language in the *Invective contra medicum* and definitions of the task of poetry (with reference to Lactantius) in the Coronation Oration, Augustine spoke highly of the benefits of using imagery. 'No-one disputes,' he wrote, 'that it is much more pleasant to learn lessons presented through imagery, and much more rewarding to discover meanings that are won only with difficulty.'<sup>227</sup> What held for the

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., II, 144–5; Green, 64–5. It is somewhat surprising—especially given the title of the paper—that the parallels between Petrarch's remarks in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* and this passage of the *De doctrina christiana* do not receive closer attention in Quillen, 'Plundering the Egyptians'. A further illuminating perspective can be found at Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, II, 72: 'A person who is a good and a true Christian should realize that truth belongs to his Lord, wherever it is found, gathering and acknowledging it even in pagan literature, but rejecting superstitious vanities...' Green, 47.

<sup>225</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, II, 148.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., IV, 72.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., II, 13; Green, 33.

reading of Scripture also held for the explanation of its messages: for, as Marrou has put it, 'le style chrétien sera donc un style biblique.'<sup>228</sup> Just as Petrarch believed that it was poetry's task to reveal truth through imagery, so for Augustine, Christian teaching benefitted from figural language both in the reading and in the retelling.

6. *The Place of Eloquence in Petrarch's Thought:  
Eloquence, Philosophy, Humanism*

In those interpretations which have seen rhetoric as occupying a more exalted position than philosophy in Petrarch's rhetorical thought, the practice of eloquence seems unusual and even puzzling when it is set alongside his broader moral concerns. The elevation of eloquence to the status of an end in itself seems to present Petrarch almost as a literary dilettante: dedicated to the pursuit of a purely literary art, he would appear to have been without a compelling reason to yoke his erudition to moral concerns, yet with an excuse to indulge the inconsistency of which he has so frequently been accused by historians.

As the preceding analysis has shown, however, there are good grounds to treat the interpretations offered by Seigel and Trinkaus, in particular, with some scepticism. In contrast to Seigel's assertion that Petrarch was tormented by the different demands of rhetoric and philosophy, we have seen that he seems to have understood the relationship between eloquence and philosophy to have been characterised more by symbiosis and harmony than by tension and conflict. Committed to the communication of truth and bound up with the moral condition of the orator or poet, he saw eloquence as a τέχνη which involved the use of figural devices, and allegory in particular, to impart the love of the good more effectively. Contrary to Trinkaus' assertion that poetry was itself a source of moral truths, it is clear that Petrarch saw that moral truth was the proper subject matter of eloquence, and its principles were understood through moral philosophy and the cultivation of personal virtue through the reading of texts both Biblical and classical. As such, instead of standing in opposition to his ethical concerns, as Seigel and Trinkaus have suggested, the practice of eloquence appears as a natural continuation of Petrarch's moral philosophy, and throughout his writings

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<sup>228</sup> Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, 529.

there is a clear sense that the moral impulse which drove him to seek after virtue and the love of God was the same as that which drove him to impart a knowledge of and affection for the good to others in his poetry and prose.

Although drawing succour from classical and medieval thought, the association between eloquence and philosophy in Petrarch's works appears to be a consequence not—as Seigel and Trinkaus have contended—of a burgeoning Ciceronianism, but of the careful study of St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. Exploring connections with Cicero, Quintilian, Cassiodorus, Isidore of Seville, and others from within an intellectual framework evocative of the medieval reception of the *De doctrina christiana*, Petrarch developed a distinctly Christian understanding of eloquence modelled after Augustine's treatise. Taking from the *De doctrina christiana* a distinctive emphasis on the importance of truth to the function and practice of eloquence, Petrarch—like Augustine—developed a rhetorical theory which, despite his willingness to derive valuable lessons from the pagan classics, prioritised a consistent moral message and related the personal search for virtue to the obligation to communicate the good to others in an appropriate form. In this respect, Petrarch's understanding of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy is in keeping with his broader assimilation of St. Augustine's thought. Having developed a programme of personal moral reformation which emphasises the rational extirpation of worldly desires and the pursuit of truth under the influence of St. Augustine in the *Secretum*, the *De otio religioso*, and the *De vita solitaria*, it seems logical that Petrarch should have also seen these works as a prelude to and realisation of a rhetorical theory also developed in St. Augustine's shadow which saw the pursuit of virtue as a component of and reason for the communication of truth.

Where Petrarch is seen to have espoused an harmonious union between eloquence and philosophy, and to have drawn inspiration for his understanding of rhetoric primarily from St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*, there is also cause to re-evaluate elements of the Kristeller thesis. While there is no reason to dispute Kristeller's assertion that Petrarch's pursuit of eloquence was the medium and inspiration for his interest in the written style of the Latin classics, or to doubt that Petrarch believed that 'true' eloquence should urge the listener or reader to adhere to the good, there are grounds to question not only the degree to which Petrarch's view of eloquence was inherited principally from classical treatises, but also the extent to which Augustine merely authorised the emulation of the classics. As a consequence, there is a powerful temptation—if not an actual

obligation—to query Kristeller's characterisation of Petrarch's humanism itself.

Petrarch's use of St. Augustine's thought went far beyond the bounds set out in Kristeller's analysis. On the one hand, Petrarch's preoccupation with eloquence as a means of urging the reader towards the good does indeed seem to have inspired him to look to the Latin classics for stylistic inspiration, and to mine the writings of Cicero, Seneca, and others for supporting quotations, but it would be mistaken to suggest that this was merely authorised by his reading of St. Augustine's works. As we have seen, Petrarch's quest for a form of eloquence which could stir the reader's moral sensibilities was derived not from classical treatises on rhetoric, but principally from St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. If Kristeller was correct to assert that *eloquentia* was the medium and inspiration for Petrarch's pursuit of classical philology and philosophy, he was incorrect to believe that his interest in *eloquentia* itself was classical in origin, and omitted to recognise that the rhetorical impulse which drove Petrarch to emulate the classics came from within an Augustinian view of eloquence. On the other hand, the fact that Petrarch's Augustinian understanding of eloquence was a necessary counterpart of his early-Augustinian approach to moral questions suggests that St. Augustine's influence did much more than help Petrarch to 'reconcile [his] religious convictions with [his] literary tastes and personal opinions'. Just as St. Augustine's early works inspired Petrarch's 'religious convictions' and 'personal opinions' on moral questions, so the saint's elaboration of a Christian rhetoric gave shape and direction to Petrarch's 'literary tastes'. Indeed, it would not be unjust to contend that St. Augustine's theology and rhetorical theory provided the medium for Petrarch's moral thought and for his eloquence, and acted as a lens through which both classical philosophy and ancient rhetoric could be read.

As such, if the broad contours of the Kristeller thesis are to be accepted, the central precepts of his argument may merit some amendment in relation to Petrarch. While it may not be invalid to suggest that rhetoric constituted one of the defining characteristics of Petrarch's humanism and provided the impetus which drove him to imitate classical models, it would not be inaccurate to contend that, in the final assessment, his 'humanism' was more Augustinian than classical in nature. If St. Augustine furnished Petrarch with the impetus for his pursuit of classical eloquence, as the inspiration for the moral programme into which classical elements were gnominically introduced, and with a model for a harmonious union

between rhetoric and philosophy, it would perhaps not be invalid to characterise Petrarch as an Augustinian humanist rather than as a humanist, or even as a Christian humanist.

7. *Petrarch and Later Renaissance Rhetorical Theory:  
Salutati and Valla*

As we have already had cause to observe, Petrarch is commonly seen as having set the tone for humanist conceptions of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy, and if he is not necessarily viewed as having directly inspired the thought of later Renaissance figures in this regard, he is at least held to have foreshadowed their thought. As we have noted, this interpretation of Petrarch's place in the development of humanist attitudes towards eloquence and philosophy is most commonly based on the contention that he saw rhetoric as superior to philosophy in some contexts, and on the belief that he based his thought principally on a Ciceronian model. Each of these precepts has, however, been challenged by our analysis, and we have seen that Petrarch took the idea of an harmonious and even symbiotic relationship between eloquence and philosophy not from classical treatises on rhetoric, but primarily from St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. As a consequence, it is reasonable to ask how far this 'Augustinian' reading of Petrarch's rhetorical theory impacts upon our understanding of his importance to later humanist conceptions of eloquence. Although a complete survey is beyond the scope of this study, the following discussion will concentrate on Coluccio Salutati and Lorenzo Valla—the two figures with whom Petrarch is most commonly associated in this regard—and will attempt to sketch briefly some of the respects in which current scholarly perceptions of Petrarch's role in the development of this highly important strand of humanistic thought might be re-evaluated. In looking at Salutati and Valla, attention will focus primarily on their views of eloquence, their attitudes towards Scripture and the Latin classics, and—in the latter's case—on the criticism of Aristotelian philosophy.

(a) *Coluccio Salutati*

Of those humanists with whom Petrarch is linked, Coluccio Salutati is commonly thought to have followed the path laid down by Petrarch most assiduously, and to have developed his antecedent's supposedly Ciceronian view of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy in a

logical, even natural, manner. As Jerrold Seigel has contended, for example, Salutati's treatment of the *querelle* 'followed the main lines laid down by Cicero and Petrarch,' and, like Cicero and Petrarch, approached 'the world of learning along a path which had its beginning in the regions of oratory, and which could be most easily travelled by one whose intellectual bearings were given by the art of rhetoric.'<sup>229</sup> Similarly, for Ronald Witt, while Salutati's outlook changed radically in his last years, from 1369, he 'unambiguously embraced the Petrarchan emphasis on the importance of humanistic studies for Christians.'<sup>230</sup>

It cannot be denied that such views have much to recommend them. There is, for example, strong evidence to suggest that Salutati had studied Petrarch's works—especially his writings on eloquence and philosophy—with some care,<sup>231</sup> and there is much to support the contention that both Salutati and Petrarch approached the problem of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy from similar perspectives. In light of our re-evaluation of Petrarch's treatment of the problem, however, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the parallels which may be drawn between Salutati and Petrarch are less pronounced than they initially appear. While there are certain points of congruence, Salutati's conception of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy is markedly different from Petrarch's in a number of respects, and it is particularly noteworthy that several of the respects in which they differ can be traced to a divergent attitude towards St. Augustine.

Whereas Petrarch's approach to the relationship between eloquence and philosophy had on occasions been based on an 'inclusive' conception of the former—embracing both poetry and prose—Salutati was often drawn to a more discriminating view. Although he pointed to the intimate connection between the two from time to time, he did not necessarily see poetry and prose as being on an entirely equal footing.<sup>232</sup> Partly as a consequence of the contexts in which he engaged with this most humanistic of problems, and perhaps partly as a result of his public role, Salutati distinguished clearly between poetry and oratory, or between poetry and prose.<sup>233</sup> In his eulogy of Petrarch, for example, written to Roberto Guidi,

<sup>229</sup> Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 64.

<sup>230</sup> Witt, *Footsteps*, 300.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 297–300; Ullman, *Humanism*, 240–44.

<sup>232</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 3:69–70, 493; 4:182, 202.

<sup>233</sup> This point seems to have been overlooked by Seigel, whose analysis occasionally falls into self-contradiction with regard to Salutati's view of poetry and prose.

count of Battifolle, on 16 August 1374,<sup>234</sup> Salutati affirmed that his sometime correspondent had surpassed Virgil in prose and Cicero in poetry, and in a later letter followed this up by arguing that prose was superior to poetry.<sup>235</sup>

Salutati's distinction between poetry and prose was based not only on an evaluation of their relative merits, but also on an acute sense of the attributes which were particular to verse. In setting out a definition of poetry at the beginning of the *De laboribus Herculis*, he followed Petrarch in arguing that verse was concerned with the celebration of virtue and the exhortation of vice, but nevertheless contended that it was inadequate to define poetry merely as 'a speech of blame or praise', since this could also be said of oratory.<sup>236</sup> Similarly, while he agreed with Petrarch's view that poetry employed figurative language, Salutati affirmed that this, too, was insufficient for a definition, since oratory and philosophy also employed fictions. What distinguished poetry was its combination of these two features with 'metrical melody'.<sup>237</sup> In contrast to Petrarch, who seems to have attached little importance to the metrical qualities of verse in his discussions of eloquence, Salutati thus defined poetry 'as concerned with praise of blame insofar as these are articulated in meter and figurative speech'.<sup>238</sup>

Despite defining poetry in different terms, Salutati nevertheless shared with Petrarch the conviction that since eloquence should move the listener to embrace the good and spurn the bad, it was necessarily closely tied to wisdom. As Salutati observed,

It is true of rhetoric as well as of poetry that they proceed along the right track when they do not lack the teachings of philosophy, that is, wisdom. Just as a poem should be censured which does not give forth the precepts of philosophy, and 'an ignorant verse and melodic trifles', so should

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<sup>234</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 1:176–86. A readable English translation can be found in Thompson and Nagel, eds. and trans., *The Three Crowns of Italy*, 3–13. For a discussion of this letter, see, for example, Kohl, 'Mourners of Petrarch,' 347–9; von Martin, *Coluccio Salutati*, 17–21.

<sup>235</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 1:338: 'Magnum fateor, versibus scribere, sed maximum, crede michi, prosaico stilo cum laudibus plenisque sententiis exundare. Quantum flumen a pelago differt, tantum carmina prosis credito fore minora.' For a discussion of this point in the context of Salutati's qualified praise of Petrarch, see Witt, *Footsteps*, 315–17.

<sup>236</sup> Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, ed. B. L. Ullman, 2 vols. (Zurich, 1951), 1:10.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Witt, 'Coluccio Salutati and the Conception of the *Poeta Theologus*,' 553; Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, 1:14.



one be praised which has been composed according to the doctrine of philosophy.<sup>239</sup>

For Salutati, as for Petrarch, philosophy was devoted to the apprehension of the truth, and, while the emphasis which Salutati placed on his faith varied through his life, that truth was undoubtedly Christian in nature.<sup>240</sup> This is perhaps most clearly evident in a letter addressed to Giovanni di San Miniato, in which Salutati argues that poetry is truth, and that the truth which poetry expresses is Christian in that verse is closest to God.<sup>241</sup> Indeed, in the short first edition of the *De laboribus Herculis*, Salutati goes so far as to say that 'poetry originated in religion, since a poetic and figurative style was developed in exalting good men to the state of divinity.'<sup>242</sup> Like Petrarch, Salutati frequently cited St. Augustine in support of this opinion, and there is more than a passing similarity between Salutati's point of view and Petrarch's explanation of his first eclogue in *Fam.* X, 4.

Having affirmed that poetry was necessarily linked with philosophy, it is perhaps unsurprising that Salutati, like Petrarch, saw eloquence as an obligation of wisdom, and was not averse to defending the study of rhetoric in terms taken from St. Augustine towards the end of his life.<sup>243</sup> But while both Petrarch and Salutati believed that the pursuit of philosophy demanded training in rhetoric, they did so for rather different reasons, and seem not to have drawn from St. Augustine to the same extent. Whereas Petrarch had argued that an apprehension of virtue obliged a wise man to exhort others to the good using eloquence, Salutati contended that the study of eloquence inspired a man to press on with his search for wisdom. In a letter written in c.1402, for example, Salutati explained that eloquence was not only rarer and more difficult than wisdom, but also demanded that whatever was being expressed was understood thoroughly. 'The best thing,' Salutati argued,

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<sup>239</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 3:484: 'comune quidem est tam rethorice quam poesi, ut tunc tantum recto calle procedant, cum philosophie, hoc est sapientie, instituta non deserunt; ut sicut vituperandum est poema, quod philosophie precepta non redolet, et "versus inopes rerum nugeque canore," sic laudandum quod iuxta philosophie rationem carmen compositum est.' quoting Horace, *Ars poetica*, 332. Cf. Salutati, *Epist.* 3:69, 84–5, 506.

<sup>240</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 2:164, 424.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:539f. On this letter, see Ullman, *Humanism*, 60.

<sup>242</sup> Ullman, *Humanism*, 68.

<sup>243</sup> The third chapter of Salutati's response to Giovanni Dominici's *Lucula noctis* argues in favour rhetorical studies on the basis of Augustinian arguments. On this tractate, see, for example, Witt, *Footsteps*, 335–7; Ullman, *Humanism*, 66–7; Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 1:55.

is for wisdom and eloquence to join together, so that the second expounds what the first comprehends. In a contest over which was to be preferred, give the palm to wisdom. Never think it is useless, however, to give individual, especial and continued attention to eloquence. For the pursuit of eloquence is itself a duty of wisdom. Eloquence is placed under wisdom, and contained in it as in the sum of all things that can be known, so that whoever pursues wisdom necessarily pursues eloquence at the same time. Accordingly as the two can be separated by the intellect, however, eloquence is more rare than wisdom. Thus, we can suitably conclude that it is more difficult than wisdom, since rarity is a most certain evidence of difficulty in those attainments which are the products of study and industry, and which we obtain through effort. Let it be added that the attention, zeal, and opportunity for speaking well spurs us on in the desire to know; so that the pursuit of eloquence is a means to the end of seeking wisdom. For nothing can be well said which is not most perfectly known. We can know many things, however, which we do not know how to say clearly and with the required ornament or grandeur of speech. Therefore eloquence, with its connection to the pursuit of wisdom, ought especially to be studied.<sup>244</sup>

It is difficult to detect anything beyond the most superficial parallel with Petrarch's thought on the relationship between eloquence and philosophy, and Salutati's emphasis on eloquence as an aid to philosophical learning in this passage seems to indicate that the influence of St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* was minimal at best.

If Salutati did not value the study of eloquence in quite the same manner as Petrarch, it might, however, be claimed that he held to a similar view of biblical exegesis and defended the reading of classical literature in comparable terms. As we have observed, Salutati, like Petrarch, associated poetry not only with Christian truth, but also with figural language, and it might be anticipated that he followed a similar line of argument in

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<sup>244</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 3:602: 'Optime quidem simul coalescunt sapientia et eloquentia, ut quantum illa capit tantum et ista pertractet. Quod si certamen utriusque fiat, que cui preoptanda sit, sapientie palmum dato. Non tamen inutile puta semper eloquentie singularem, precipuam et continuam operam dare. Non enim eloquentie studium non etiam sapientie munus est. Subicitur eloquentia sapientie et in ipsa, quasi toto quodam, quod cuncta scibilia possideat, continetur, ut qui sapientie studium profitetur, simul et eloquentie profiteatur necesse sit. Quia tamen ea ratione, qua duo hec per intellectum ab invicem separantur, inconvenienter possumus arbitrari, quoniam quidem in his habitibus, qui studio industriaque parantur quosque laboribus adipiscimur, raritas argumentum est certissimum difficultatis. Accedit ad hec, quod intentio, studium facultasque bene dicendi calcar est ut sapere concupiscamus; ut huius eloquentie studium capessende sapientie sit etiam non sciatur. Possumus multa scire, que tamen eloqui distincte debitoque cum ornatu sermonisve maiestate nescimus; ut maxime studendum sit eloquentie, cui et sapientie studium annexum est.'; trans. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 83–4.

responding to the detractors of the Latin classics. But again, what parallels may be found remain somewhat superficial.

For both Petrarch and Salutati, the value of classical literature was in some ways closely related to the reading strategies which were brought to bear on the study of Scripture, and the importance which they each attached to the Latin classics was rooted in the assumption that pagan literature, like the Bible, could be understood in allegorical terms. Just as figural language could be found in Scripture,<sup>245</sup> so an allegorical reading of the pagan classics could reveal a hidden, Christian truth. In responding to Giuliano Zonarini's criticism of Virgil on 25 October 1378, for example, Salutati argued that while Scripture was clearly more edifying to read, the works of pagan poets could be seen to support the precepts of the Christian faith.<sup>246</sup> In Salutati's eyes, much that Virgil had written about the Roman gods related not to the deities of the ancient pantheon, 'but was in conformity with the true God'.<sup>247</sup> Although a Christian should not attempt to learn their faith from the ancient poets, Salutati argued, he should gladly embrace anything which he finds which is consonant with the truth.<sup>248</sup> Were there any doubt that this was the case, Salutati pointed out, Zonarini should reflect on the fact that St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and other giants of the early Church had studied the ancient poets with great profit.<sup>249</sup>

<sup>245</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 4: 176–8.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:302; Witt, 'Coluccio Salutati and the Conception of the *Poeta Theologus*,' 547.

<sup>247</sup> Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, 1: 82–3: 'Et de deo quidem poetica nostra pertractat tum secundum se et actus intrinsecos, tum secundum effectus qui procedunt ad extra. Nam quod inquit poeta noster "Nate, mee vires, mea magna potentia, solus, nate, patris summi qui tela Typhoea temnis", ex abditis divine maiestatis, unitate scilicet essentie et multiplicitate persone, si pie intelligas, dictum est. Etenim quamvis Maronem et alios gentiles poetas veri dei misterium et profunditas latuerit trinitatis, multa tamen de suis diis loquentes, dum ipsos ad deitatis maiestatem extollere stagabant, non illis quidem diis, qui profescto nulli sunt, se vero deo congruentia protulerunt.'

<sup>248</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 1: 304. A similar sentiment can be found in Salutati's *De fato et fortuna*: MS Urb. lat 201, ff. 11v–12r: 'Non inuenies etiam haec explicata verbis in carminibus poetarum, qui non de philosophia vel artibus canunt, sed potius ex philosophia vel artibus et ex omni sapientia quae rerum humanarum divinarumque scientia est carmina sua componunt... Verum licet haec non inueniantur explicata verbis repperire enim licet apud poetas tum absconsa sub fabulis tum poeticis narrationibus involuta.' quoted at Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 1: 355, n.75.

<sup>249</sup> On this point, see Witt, 'Coluccio Salutati and the Conception of the *Poeta Theologus*,' 547; Ullman, *Humanism*, 61.

This is, however, as far as the similarity between Petrarch and Salutati goes. Although they agreed that allegory could conceal a hidden truth in pagan literature, Petrarch and Salutati differed in their understanding of the source of this truth, and once again,<sup>250</sup> they each seem to have drawn from different elements of St. Augustine's thought, and to a different extent. Whereas Petrarch's emphasis on figural language focussed attention on the reader in the recovery of truth, and attributed the truthfulness of anything found in pagan literature to the subjective agency of the author, Salutati argued that ancient literature could contain a truth which could be observed when classical allegories were unravelled, but which was ultimately derived from providence. Put differently, Petrarch was able to read pagan literature almost teleologically, as if it were written in anticipation of Christianity (but knowing that it evidently was not), but Salutati believed that the pagan poets were sometimes inspired directly by the Christian God, without their knowledge. Replying to a further letter from Zonarini on 5 May 1379, for example, Salutati pointed out that the 'veritatis divinus spiritus' resonated either beneath the mystery of allegories or in the expression of words in the poets' verses.<sup>251</sup> Some time later, in the first edition of the *De laboribus Herculis*, he was yet more explicit. The ancient poets, Salutati argued, had been inspired directly by providence,<sup>252</sup> and then cloaked divinely-inspired truths in metaphor and allegory. This could be taken surprisingly far. For Salutati, it followed that the multiplicity of gods found in the works of ancient poets were not an expression of polytheism, but of a poetic tendency to give different names to the one God depending on the circumstances of the manifestation.<sup>253</sup> Although such a view certainly has strong parallels with St. Augustine's arguments in the *De civitate Dei*—particularly with regard to Salutati's defence of

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<sup>250</sup> The following is indebted to Witt, 'Coluccio Salutati and the Conception of the *Poeta Theologus*'.

<sup>251</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 1:324: '...quid sperare possumus de poetarum carminibus, in quibus plerumque videtur aut sub allegoriarum mysterio aut in ipso verborum propatulo certissime veritatis divinus spiritus resonare?'

<sup>252</sup> Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, 2:588: 'Videntes autem deum, totius mundi architectorem, omnia in sapientia fecisse cunctaque in providentia gubernare, cum tamen sapientia ipsa nichil aliud sit quam ipse deus, et ex deo per providentiam infinitos videntes effectus deum variis nominibus appellaverunt cum tamen unum et eundem esse sentirent.' Cf. Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, 2:592; 1:14.

<sup>253</sup> E.g. Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, 2:589, 596.

Varro,<sup>254</sup> and of Jupiter/Juno<sup>255</sup>—it would certainly have horrified Petrarch, who was uncompromising in his condemnation of polytheism.

This was not, of course, to say that Salutati believed that the writings of the pagan poets were consonant with the Christian faith. Like Petrarch, he appears to have followed Augustine's belief that figural language could be used to express falsehood as readily as it could be used to give voice to truth.<sup>256</sup> Being ignorant of the operation of providence, and presumably not being the recipients of divine inspiration at all times, the pagan poets often mixed truth with falsehood, as Salutati signalled in his distinction between secular poetry and Scripture in the *De laboribus Herculis*,<sup>257</sup> and in a letter addressed to Giovanni di San Miniato in 1389/90.<sup>258</sup> Unlike Petrarch, however, Salutati appears to have been more indulgent than Petrarch in dealing with such aberrations. In contrast to Petrarch's outright condemnation of Cicero's reluctance to abandon his polytheistic tendencies, Salutati was inclined to excuse those elements of classical literature which were at variance with Christianity. With reference to comments found in a letter addressed to Iacopo della Massa Alidosi in c.1398,<sup>259</sup> Ullman rightly observes that Salutati argues that '... if the pagans did not know marriage in the Christian sense, none but the descendants of Jacob can be called the offspring of legitimate marriage. Antiquity must be judged by its own standards, not ours.'<sup>260</sup> As a consequence of his willingness to read pagan literature teleologically, Petrarch was not so content to treat pagans like Cicero as pagans, and seems to have been less disposed to treat antiquity in so 'historical' a manner.

(b) *Lorenzo Valla*

In the eyes of many recent scholars, Lorenzo Valla towered over the thought of early *quattrocento* humanism. Truculent, irascible, and powerfully argumentative, he has frequently been portrayed not only as a brilliant classical philologist and biblical scholar who exposed the Donation of Constantine

<sup>254</sup> E.g. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, IV, 22, 31; VII, 6, 17.

<sup>255</sup> E.g. *ibid.*, VII, 11.

<sup>256</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, II, 132.

<sup>257</sup> Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, 1:86–7.

<sup>258</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 3:226. It should, however, be noted that Salutati appears to have reformulated this view somewhat towards the end of his life, on which see Witt, 'Coluccio Salutati and the Conception of the *Poeta Theologus*,' 560.

<sup>259</sup> Salutati, *Epist.* 3:264.

<sup>260</sup> Ullman, *Humanism*, 56.

as a forgery,<sup>261</sup> defended the elegance of the Latin language,<sup>262</sup> and set the study of the New Testament on a new footing,<sup>263</sup> but also as a 'radical religious philosopher, and the scourge of the Aristotelian establishment,'<sup>264</sup> whose *De vero falsoque bono*,<sup>265</sup> *Encomium S. Thomae*,<sup>266</sup> and *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*<sup>267</sup> stand out as meriting particular attention. Yet throughout his many and varied works, Valla displayed a consistent and almost overriding preoccupation with rhetoric, and particularly with its

<sup>261</sup> Lorenzo Valla, *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione*; English translation in *The Treatise of Lorenzo Valla on the Donation of Constantine*, ed. and trans. C. B. Coleman (New Haven, 1922; repr. Toronto, 1993). The fundamental study of this work remains Camporeale, 'Lorenzo Valla's *Oratio* on the Pseudo-Donation of Constantine'; and idem, 'Lorenzo Valla e il *De falso credita donatione*. Retorica, libertà ed ecclesiologia nel '400,' *Memorie d'omericane* n.s. 19 (1988): 191–293. Also of considerable value is G. Antonazzi, *Lorenzo Valla e la polemica sulla Donazione di Costantino, con testi inediti dei secoli XV–XVII* (Rome, 1985).

<sup>262</sup> Lorenzo Valla, *Elegantiae linguae Latinae*; text in Lorenzo Valla, *Opera omnia*, ed. E. Garin, 2 vols. (Turin, 1962), 1:1–235. On the *Elegantiae*, see, for example, W. Ax, 'Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457). *Elegantiarum linguae Latinae libri sex* (1449),' in *Von Eleganz und Barbarei. Lateinische Grammatik und Stilistik in Renaissance und Barock*, ed. W. Ax (Wiesbaden, 2001), 29–57; L. Cesarini Martinelli, 'Note sulla polemica Poggio-Valla e sulla fortuna delle *Elegantiae*,' *Interpres: Rivista di studi quattrocenteschi* 3 (1980): 29–79; D. Marsh, 'Grammar, Method, and Polemic in Lorenzo Valla's *Elegantiae*,' *Rinascimento* 19 (1979): 91–116; M. Regoliosi, 'Le *Elegantie* del Valla come "grammatica" antinormativa,' *Studi di grammatica italiana* 19 (2000): 315–36.

<sup>263</sup> As with so many of his works, Valla's treatment of the New Testament appeared in two redactions. The first can be found in Lorenzo Valla, *Collatio Novi Testamenti*, ed. A. Perosa (Florence, 1970); the second, which was first published by Erasmus in 1405 under the title *Laurentii Vallensis viri tam graecae quam latinae linguae peritissimi in Latinum Novi testamenti interpretationem ex collatione Graecarum exemplarium Adnotationes apprime utiles*, is printed in Valla, *Opera omnia*, 1:801–95. On Valla's *Collatio* and *Adnotationes*, see, for example, S. Garofalo, 'Gli umanisti italiani del secolo XV e la Bibbia,' *Biblica* 27 (1946): 338–75; A. Morisi, 'La filologia neotestamentaria di Lorenzo Valla,' *Nuova rivista storica* 48 (1964): 35–49; C. Celenza, 'Renaissance Humanism and the New Testament: Lorenzo Valla's Annotations to the Vulgate,' *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 24 (1994): 33–52.

<sup>264</sup> Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, 22.

<sup>265</sup> Lorenzo Valla, *De vero falsoque bono*, ed. M. de Panizza Lorch (Bari, 1970). On the *De vero falsoque bono*, see, for example, Panizza, 'Lorenzo Valla's *De vero falsoque bono*'; Vickers, 'Valla's ambivalent praise of pleasure'.

<sup>266</sup> Lorenzo Valla, *Encomium S. Thomae*, in Valla, *Opera omnia*, 2:393–5. On the *Encomium*, see, for example, H. H. Gray, 'Valla's *Encomium* of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Humanist Conception of Christian Antiquity,' in *Essays in History and Literature... Presented to Stanley Pargellis*, ed. H. Bluhm (Chicago, 1965), 37–52; S. I. Camporeale, 'Lorenzo Valla tra Medioevo e Rinascimento: *Encomion S. Thomae*—1457,' *Memorie Domenicane* n.s. 7 (1976): 3–190.

<sup>267</sup> Valla, *Repastinatio*. On the *Repastinatio*, see, for example, the excellent studies by Mack, *Renaissance Argument* and Nauta, *In Defense of Common Sense*.

relationship to dialectic and philosophy.<sup>268</sup> Although the originality of his engagement with the *querelle* in the context of Renaissance humanism is beyond doubt, it is nevertheless common for his thought on the relationship between eloquence and philosophy to be presented as having taken its cue from the principles elucidated by Petrarch. Both Kristeller<sup>269</sup> and Trinkaus,<sup>270</sup> for example, link Valla's approach to philosophy and rhetoric with Petrarch's thought. Similarly, in Seigel's eyes, for example, Valla 'understood the aim and characteristics' of rhetoric and philosophy 'in the same general terms as Cicero and Petrarch did,' and while 'many of his conclusions would have been rejected by Salutati and Bruni, it was Valla who went furthest along the intellectual path opened up by Petrarch.'<sup>271</sup>

In some respects, it must be granted that Valla's understanding of rhetoric was ostensibly similar to the conception of eloquence found in Petrarch's works. Although there is little evidence of Valla having placed particular emphasis on the use of figural devices or on metrical rhythm in the manner of Petrarch or Salutati, he nevertheless conceived of the function of rhetoric in a similar fashion. As he explained in the first book of the *Dialecticarum Disputationum Libri III*, the orator sought not only to teach, but also to delight and to move. Like Petrarch, Valla saw that the orator ultimately fulfilled a moral role: his task was 'to encourage people to virtue, to show them how to live well, to discourage evil and worthless actions, and to mete out praise and blame where they are deserved.'<sup>272</sup> Although Valla only ever explained the connection in a rather vague manner, this moral purpose was ultimately Christian in nature.<sup>273</sup> In defending himself to Pope Eugenius IV in 1434, for example, Valla contended that his intention was always to please God and to aid men through his study of

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<sup>268</sup> Instrumental in highlighting the importance of rhetoric to Valla's thought have been Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla*; H. B. Gerl, *Rhetorik als Philosophie: Lorenzo Valla* (Munich, 1974).

<sup>269</sup> Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 19.

<sup>270</sup> Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 113.

<sup>271</sup> Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 168–9.

<sup>272</sup> Lorenzo Valla, *Dialecticarum Disputationum Libri III*, bk. 1, pref.; in Valla, *Opera omnia*, 1:693; trans. L. Gardiner Janik, 'Lorenzo Valla: The Primacy of Rhetoric and the De-Moralization of History,' *History and Theory* 12/4 (1973): 389–404, here 390.

<sup>273</sup> On Valla's faith, see, for example, H. J. Grimm, 'Lorenzo Valla's Christianity,' *Church History* 18/2 (June 1949): 75–88; Camporeale *Lorenzo Valla*, ch. 3.



rhetoric,<sup>274</sup> and offered a similar view in the preface to the second book of the *Repastinatio*.<sup>275</sup>

In contrast to Petrarch, however, the moral purpose which Valla attributed to the orator did not entail anything approaching a symbiotic or harmonious relationship between rhetoric and philosophy. Indeed, quite the opposite. Throughout his works, Valla attacked philosophy in the most strident and forceful fashion, and not only strove to illustrate its inadequacy, but also endeavoured to demonstrate that 'philosophy is like a soldier or a tribune under the command of oratory, and, as the great tragedian calls it, the queen'.<sup>276</sup> Alone, philosophy was a threat to Christianity and was unable to restrain men's actions. In the preface to the fourth book of the *Elegantiae*, for example, he pointed out that while philosophy could hardly be thought to be consistent with the Christian faith (since it was from philosophical sources that heresies had always emerged), rhetoric contained nothing that did not merit praise.<sup>277</sup> Similarly, in the *Repastinatio*, Valla inveighs against the deceit of contemporary logicians and their disputations, in which, as Peter Mack has observed, 'the glory of winning is emphasized more than the goal of reaching truth'.<sup>278</sup>

In attacking philosophy, Valla concentrated his attention on Aristotle, and it is perhaps in this respect that the distance which separates his conception of rhetoric from that of Petrarch is most clearly evident. Despite their shared dislike of Aristotle and contemporary scholastics, Petrarch and Valla attack Aristotle for very different reasons in the context of their discussions of rhetoric and philosophy. As we have seen, Petrarch specifically rejected the notion that Aristotle's failure was merely rhetorical, and pointed out that his writings were unable to move men to the good because he lacked a knowledge of the true God. Since knowledge was prior to will, true eloquence required philosophy. For Valla, who also

<sup>274</sup> G. Mancini, 'Alcune Lettere di Lorenzo Valla,' *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana* 21 (1893): 30, quoted at Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 139.

<sup>275</sup> Valla, *Repastinatio*, 175–77; on this passage, see Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, 110–14.

<sup>276</sup> Valla, *De vero falsoque bono*: 'Siquidem philosophia velut miles est aut tribunus sub imperatrice oratione, et ut magnus quidem Tragicus appellat, regina'; text at Valla, *Opera omnia*, 1:906–7.

<sup>277</sup> Valla, *Elegantiae*, bk. 4, pref.: 'Nolo hoc in loco comparationem facere inter philosophiam et eloquentiam, utra magis obesse possit, de quo multi dixerunt, ostendentes philosophiam cum religione Christiana vix coherere, omnesque haereses ex philosophiae fontibus profluxisse. Rhetoricam vero nihil habere laudabile...' in Valla, *Opera omnia*, 1:119.

<sup>278</sup> Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, 277.

affirmed that the will was superior to the intellect, Aristotle's failure was entirely rhetorical.

In the third book of the *Elegantiae*, Valla asserted that his work on dialectic had revealed that philosophers had erred because they lacked the *facultas loquendi*.<sup>279</sup> Having preferred a technical and misleading language over that of ordinary life, Aristotle and his followers had been led into a multiplicity of harmful errors through their obsessive and narrow use of dialectic. In reducing Aristotle's ten categories to one in the first book of the *Repastinatio*, Valla pointed out that the majority of the distinctions which the Stagirite had drawn were the inaccurate products of an inadequate use of words.<sup>280</sup> By the same token, Aristotle's logic also failed on linguistic grounds.<sup>281</sup> Without a *facultas loquendi*, Aristotle and the philosophers had fatally compromised their use of dialectic, and as a consequence, had not only robbed themselves of the capacity to derive true propositions, but had also condemned themselves to countering the precepts of the Christian faith. Ordinary language was, Valla contended, sufficient to describe the world,<sup>282</sup> and both fruitless disputation and vain error could be avoided by devoting serious study to what words actually mean. 'Ordinary language' did not, however, entail an acquaintance with the everyday language of fifteenth-century streets, but signified the language used by the greatest classical authors, amongst whom Quintilian stood out as the ideal.<sup>283</sup>

Although the philosophers had erred greatly, however, Valla did believe that the study of dialectic was not to be neglected. As his critique of Aristotle suggests, he considered that dialectic could be of great value if used alongside a thorough grounding in rhetoric, a view with which Petrarch

<sup>279</sup> Valla, *Elegantiae*, bk. 3, pref.: 'An philosophorum libri, qui ne a Gothis quidem, aud Vandalis intelligeretur? quos ego ob hoc maxime errare, quod loquendi facultate caruerunt, in libris meis *De dialectica* ostendo.' *Opera omnia*, 1:80.

<sup>280</sup> On the first book of the *Repastinatio*, see, for example, Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, 37–73; S. I. Camporeale, 'Lorenzo Valla, "Repastinatio, liber primus": Retorica e linguaggio,' in *Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo italiano. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi umanistici*, ed. O. Besomi and M. Regoliosi (Padua, 1986), 217–39.

<sup>281</sup> On Valla's critique of Aristotle's logic, see, for example, Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, 74–95; Nauta, *In Defense of Common Sense*, 211–268.

<sup>282</sup> Much debate has surrounded Valla's stress on 'ordinary language'; see, for example, R. Waswo, 'The "Ordinary Language Philosophy" of Lorenzo Valla,' *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 41 (1979): 255–71; Camporeale, 'Lorenzo Valla, "Repastinatio, liber primus"; J. Monfasani, 'Was Lorenzo Valla an ordinary language philosopher?' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50 (1989): 309–23; Nauta, *In Defense of Common Sense*, 269–92.

<sup>283</sup> M. Tavoni, 'Lorenzo Valla e il volgare,' in *Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo Italiano*, ed. O. Besomi and M. Regoliosi (Padua, 1986), 199–216.

would have had very little sympathy. Indeed, it is not without merit that Mack has observed that in the *Repastinatio*, Valla contributed 'to rebuilding the unity of the *trivium* on humanist principles.'<sup>284</sup> For Valla, dialectic was a subordinate part of rhetoric, and was one of the many methods that could be used by the orator. As he explained in the preface to the second book of the *Repastinatio*,

dialectic used to be an entirely brief and simple thing, which can be seen from a comparison with rhetoric. For what is dialectic but a kind of confirmation and confutation? These very things are part of invention, which is one of the five parts of rhetoric. 'The use of the syllogism belongs to the dialectician' What? Doesn't the orator use the same thing? Indeed he uses not only the syllogism but also the enthymeme and epicheireme, and you can also add induction. But see what the difference is. The dialectician uses the syllogism naked (as one might say). The orator uses it clothed in purple, and armed and decorated with gold and gems: so that, if the orator wishes them to appear, the syllogism has a vast weight of precepts at his disposal. Poverty becomes the dialectician, I would almost have said. Because the orator not only wishes to teach, as the dialectician does, but he also wants to please and to move...<sup>285</sup>

While both the philosopher and the orator used dialectic, it was only the orator who was equipped to use it appropriately (that is, on the basis of a *facultas loquendi*), and who was consequently able not only to apprehend truth, but also to urge the listener towards the good. It was the orator's grasp of 'ordinary language' that allowed him to employ dialectic in a satisfactory manner and that ensured rhetoric's absolute superiority to philosophy. Lacking such an interest in the relationship between dialectic and language, Petrarch's treatment of eloquence presents dialectic only in negative terms, and in describing the harmony which should exist between rhetoric and philosophy, relied most fully on the importance of a true knowledge of the one God.

<sup>284</sup> Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, 113.

<sup>285</sup> Valla, *Repastinatio*, 175: 'Erat enim dialectica res brevis prorsus et facilis, id quod ex comparatione rhetoricae diiudicari potest. Nam quid aliud est dialectica, quam species confirmationis et confutationis? Hae ipsae sunt partes inventionis, inventio una ex quinque rhetoricae partibus. "Dialectici est syllogismo uti". Quid, non orator eodem utitur? Immo utitur nec eo solo, verum etiam enthymemate et epicheiremate, adde etiam inductionem. Sed vide quid interest. Dialecticus utitur 'nudo' (ut sic loquar) syllogismo, orator autem 'vestito armatoque, auro et purpura ac gemmis ornato': ut multae sint ei et magnae praeceptorum comparandae divitiae, si videri volet orator. Dialecticum, prope dixerim, pauperas decet. Quoniam non tantum vult docere orator, ut dialecticus facit, sed delectare etiam ac movere...'; trans. Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, 110.

As we have already observed, Valla's preoccupation with 'ordinary language' led him to place considerable stress on the study of the ancient classics. But while Valla shared Petrarch's enthusiasm for classical literature, he was unable to defend the reading of pagan writings in the same terms. In rather different ways, both Petrarch and Salutati had recommended the study of the classics not only because the works of the pagan authors constituted an excellent guide to the techniques and devices proper to eloquence, but also on the grounds that, directly or allegorically, ancient texts expressed views which were often commensurate with the precepts of the Christian faith. Valla, by contrast, adamantly rejected the notion that the ancient classics were morally edifying for the Christian reader. In the third book of the *De vero falsoque bono*, for example, the character of Antonio da Rho (who gives voice to Valla's own opinions, as he explained in the *Annotationes in errores Antonii Raudensis*)<sup>286</sup> is made to exclaim:

[t]o the ancients, I concede letters, the study of doctrine, and (what has always been valued the most), a knowledge of speaking. But insofar as morals are concerned, I fear, Leonardo, that nothing in our religion can assent to their virtues, although you may convince yourself that those ancient authors were clearly wise men.<sup>287</sup>

Indeed, as he himself forcefully maintained, despite his qualified endorsement of aspects of Epicureanism, it might justly be said that the purpose of the *De vero falsoque bono* was to illustrate the incompatibility of Christianity with the philosophical systems which underpinned so much classical literature.<sup>288</sup> Somewhat perversely, while Stoics such as Cicero might have combined philosophy with rhetoric, Valla's implicit belief in the importance of faith to wisdom precluded him from endorsing the classics as a source of learning that was compatible with Christianity.

Yet because Valla saw the ancient classics as an embodiment of excellent Latinity, he was nevertheless able to argue that a thorough grounding in pagan literature was advantageous—and even necessary—to the Christian orator. In advocating a return to classical Latinity in the *Elegantiae*,

<sup>286</sup> On which point, see G. di Napoli, *Lorenzo Valla: Filosofia e religione nell'umanesimo italiano* (Rome, 1971), 205.

<sup>287</sup> Valla, *Opera omnia*, 1:975: 'Cui antiquitati concedo literas, studia doctrinarum, et quod semper plurimum valuit, dicendi scientiam. Sed quod ad mores attinet, vereor Leonarde, ut tibi persuadeas illos veteres plane fuisse sapientes, et ad ipsorum virtutes nihil ex nostra religione posse accedere.'

<sup>288</sup> For an excellent analysis of this work, see Vickers, 'Valla's ambivalent praise of pleasure'.

Valla suggested that the study of the ancient classics would provide the fifteenth-century orator with the *facultas loquendi* that would allow him to avoid the errors of the philosophers, and to speak truly in such a way that his listeners would be encouraged to embrace virtue.

Thus, while they each came to recommend the study of ancient literature, Valla and Petrarch did so for strikingly different reasons. While Petrarch's defence of the classics was derived principally from an Augustinian position, Valla—who also admired St. Augustine—based his understanding of the merits of ancient literature on a critique of philosophy and on a conception of rhetoric that was founded principally on a reading of Quintilian.

A similar point can also be made about attitudes towards the reading of Scripture in the works of Petrarch and Valla. Although each believed that rhetoric was essential to expressing the Christian precepts found in the Bible, their attitudes towards the reading of Scripture differed significantly. The difference between their approaches can be related to the manner in which each recommended the study of classical literature. Whereas Petrarch's view of eloquence led him to suggest that both the Bible and the classics could be read in an allegorical manner, Valla's contention that truth could only be apprehended on the basis of a full comprehension of the precise meaning of words not only led him to praise the literary quality of ancient literature over its philosophical content, but also compelled him to pass over the allegorical quality of Scripture in favour of an over-riding concern with linguistic accuracy.

For Valla, the problem of understanding Scripture was not so much a matter of uncovering allegorical meanings through exegesis, but a question of whether the Latin text of the New Testament accurately reflected 'the original Christian experience' passed down in the Greek.<sup>289</sup> Having observed that the transmission of the text of the Bible had already been confused by the time Jerome completed the Vulgate, Valla argued that after a further millennium, the tradition had become even more confused. The text of the Bible was in need of repair, and, for Valla, this required a careful comparison between the Vulgate and the Greek text of the New Testament, and the systematic correction of the numerous mistranslations and errors. By providing the reader with an accurate comprehension

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<sup>289</sup> S. I. Camporeale, 'Lorenzo Valla: The Transcending of Philosophy through Rhetoric,' *Romance Notes* 30/3 (Spring 1990): 169–284, here 279–82.

of the Latin New Testament in the *Collatio* and the *Annotationes*, Valla intended to reveal the meaning of Scripture more clearly.<sup>290</sup>

While both Petrarch and Valla believed that the study of rhetoric was vital to understanding the Bible, therefore, their reasoning was diametrically different. For Valla, textual fidelity and an acute consciousness of the historicity of the text were paramount,<sup>291</sup> whereas for Petrarch, the interpretation of the Bible had no such linguistic dimension, and relied instead on the reader's discretion in unravelling allegories. While Petrarch's source of inspiration in Biblical matters was undoubtedly St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*, Valla could hardly have been further from an Augustinian perspective, and instead seems to have adapted an approach derived from Quintilian to Scriptural purposes.

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Despite the frequency with which Petrarch is presented as the forerunner of later humanists' attitudes towards the relationship between eloquence and philosophy, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that such a claim is easier to make than to substantiate. Having observed that Petrarch advocated a harmonious relationship between eloquence and philosophy, we have noted that the Augustinian character of his thought on this topic set him apart from Coluccio Salutati and Lorenzo Valla. Whereas the key features of Petrarch's engagement with the *querelle*—the moral function of rhetoric, the virtuous man's moral obligation to study eloquence, the importance of figural language, an allegorical reading of Scripture and the classics, and the 'Christian' critique of Aristotle, amongst others—can be traced to his reading of the *De doctrina christiana*, few of these can be found in the same form in Salutati, and almost none can be detected in Valla.

Whereas there are admittedly some points of similarity between Petrarch and Salutati, they understood poetry in different terms, and offered radically dissimilar interpretations of the need to combine eloquence and philosophy, the truthfulness of Scripture, and the value of classical literature. Although they each drew on St. Augustine's works,

<sup>290</sup> Valla, *Collatio*, 3–10.

<sup>291</sup> For a useful (if rather derivative) introductory perspective on this point, see, for example, J. Dietz Moss, 'Rhetoric, the Measure of All Things,' *MLN* 119/1 (Jan. 2004): S56–S65, here S64–5. See also the clear and thorough analysis by J. H. Bentley, 'Biblical Philology and Christian Humanism: Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus as Scholars of the Gospels,' *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 8/2 (July 1977): 8–28.

Petrarch appears to have been the more devoted acolyte, and Salutati seems to have taken more from the saint's providential thought than from his rhetorical theory.

By the same token, while Valla may have accepted that rhetoric had a moral purpose, and expressed this function in similar terms, his wider understanding of eloquence bears little comparison with that found in Petrarch's works, and there seems to be almost no reason for supposing him to have been the most determined follower of Petrarch's lead. While Petrarch saw that eloquence and philosophy should enjoy a symbiotic relationship, Valla strove to attack philosophy altogether, and endeavoured to annex dialectic to rhetoric. Beginning from a different conception of the importance of rhetoric, Petrarch's critique of Aristotle has nothing in common with Valla's 'linguistic' offensive against the Stagirite. And while their defence of the Latin classics was similar in one respect, their approaches towards the interpretation of the Bible could scarcely be more unrelated.

In light of our rather brief comparison of Petrarch, Salutati, and Valla, it does not seem unjust to argue that Petrarch's place in the history of humanist attitudes towards eloquence and philosophy merits re-evaluation. Although engaging with essentially the same problem as later humanists, Petrarch's specifically Augustinian approach to the *querelle* seems to have had comparatively little impact on the shape of subsequent debate. If his writings on eloquence were read by humanists like Salutati and Valla, those aspects of his thought which were most closely related to the *De doctrina christiana* were either overlooked or disregarded, and what resonances can be found in the works of Salutati and Valla are overshadowed by chasms of disagreement either in argumentation or in the use of sources. Thus, if there is any cause to regard Petrarch as the forerunner of humanist conceptions of eloquence and philosophy, it is more as a symbol for later figures than as a direct influence.



## EPILOGUE

Although Petrarch made frequent use of the works of classical authors ranging from Cicero and Seneca to Virgil and Horace, this study has demonstrated that the conceptual foundations of his approach to questions of moral philosophy was based on a Christian theology derived principally from the writings of St. Augustine. Rather than using such works as Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* and Seneca's letters as repositories of a philosophy the precepts of which could be reproduced uncritically, Petrarch employed selective quotations in a gnomic fashion, and appropriated imagery in a similar manner. Recognising that St. Augustine himself had been heavily influenced by his knowledge of ancient thought—particularly Cicero's *Hortensius*—Petrarch found in Augustine's works a precedent for integrating references drawn from classical literature into the framework of Christian moral theology.

Whereas previous scholars have been inclined to believe that Petrarch's affection for St. Augustine's thought was eclectic and inconsistent, we have seen that the imputation of intellectual equivocation has been based on a tendency to treat Augustine's theology as a monolithic body of thought, and to overlook developments in the saint's views. Rather than having known St. Augustine merely as the author of either a voluntarist or a fideistic theology, Petrarch has been shown to have had a deep and subtle understanding of his thought, and was not only drawn to his early and most introspective writings, but was also highly conscious of the possibility of using these texts as a lens through which to read classical literature.

From works such as the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*, Petrarch derived an understanding of the opposition of the fleeting temporal world and the enduring truth of the eternal, and an appreciation of the role of the intellect in determining virtue. In contrast both to St. Augustine's later, more fideistic writings, and to the saint's anti-Manichean dialogues, these works illustrated that while man was continually drawn to temporalities which could lead only to sorrow and dissatisfaction, he possessed the capacity to orient himself towards God and merit the one true happiness by recognising the inadequacy of the corporeal world, and by using the divine gift of reason to unveil the truth which resided within him. Using language which shared much in common with Stoic philosophy,

Augustine's early, introspective works provided Petrarch with a model for the role accorded to reason and the *meditatio mortis* in the *Secretum*, while at the same time allowing the possibility for classical quotation without fear of inconsistency.

Petrarch carried Augustine's early emphasis on reason and the transience of worldly things into his treatment of *otium* and *solitudo*. Despite appropriating medieval tropes—such as the 'Three Enemies of Man' and the imagery of asceticism inherited from the desert fathers—in the *De otio religioso*, and employing classical motifs—such as the opposition of the *occupatus* and *solitarius*, and the contrast between *rus* and *urbs*—in the *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch appears to have modelled the two concepts after Augustine's notion of *vacatio*. Each involving activities which bear the hallmarks of later traditions, Petrarch nevertheless invested both *otium* and *solitudo* with the essential characteristics of Augustine's early theology. Means of conceiving of the virtuous life, *otium* and *solitudo* were also a freedom from cares in that they required the intellectual negation of desire and the orientation of the self towards God in the same way as with *vacatio* in St. Augustine's works.

Similarly, Petrarch's conception of friendship bears similarities with classical—and especially Ciceronian—notions of *amicitia*. As this study has demonstrated, however, Petrarch seems to have read classical texts not as archetypes, but as pointing towards a Christian understanding of the concept, and as mines of convenient literary allusions. Despite often using the language of Ciceronian *amicitia*, a close analysis of the texts reveals that Petrarch's friendship was characterised by a reorientation of the word *amor* which was deeply Christian. Viewing *amor* in a manner strongly evocative of St. Augustine's theology, while also evoking the spirit of medieval monastic thought, Petrarch successfully integrated *amicitia* into the framework of a moral system which depended on the rational extirpation of worldly desires and the pursuit of divine knowledge, and made the cultivation of close friendships a greater moral obligation than it had been for Cicero or Seneca.

Petrarch's appropriation of St. Augustine's thought, and recognition of the scope which it allowed for the exploration and use of classical literature is perhaps most strongly evident in his understanding of the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy. Despite claims that Petrarch's conception of this relationship was based on a Ciceronian model, and prioritised eloquence over philosophical consistency, his emphasis on truth and the moral condition of the orator, as well as his apparent disregard for rhetorical technicalities in education, sets him apart from classical

thought. Parallels can, of course, be drawn between elements of his concept of eloquence and rhetorical theories developed by figures such as Cicero, Quintilian, and Boethius, and points of similarity can also be observed with later medieval traditions, but the co-dependence of eloquence and moral philosophy in Petrarch's thought, combined with the greater importance attached to the orator's inculcation of virtue than to his understanding of rules, seem to mark Petrarch's thought out as having been influenced most strongly by a reading of St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. Offering Petrarch a model for recommending both biblical study and the reading of classical texts, the *De doctrina christiana* also allowed him the possibility to present eloquence as an integral part of a system of moral theology in which truth and virtue co-existed.

In showing that Petrarch's thought was more heavily indebted to St. Augustine's theology than has previously been supposed, this study has suggested that there are good grounds to re-evaluate the manner in which his humanism is perceived. Having observed that Petrarch was able to use St. Augustine's early and most introspective works as a lens through which to view classical literature and philosophy, it is reasonable to posit not only that his enthusiasm for the ancient classics was mediated, or even inspired, by his devotion to the saint's thought, but also that the manner in which he read works such as Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* was shaped by his understanding of Augustine's theology. Rather than having sought to rekindle the culture and thought of the ancient past in its original form, as many have supposed, Petrarch's appreciation of St. Augustine's theology allowed him to read classical texts in an almost teleological fashion, as if they pointed the way towards Christian truth, and permitted him to subordinate the original context of particular sentiments to his desire to adapt adages taken from ancient writings to an Augustinian moral philosophy. As a consequence, it seems reasonable to characterise Petrarch not as a 'humanist' *per se*, or even as a Christian humanist, but as an Augustinian humanist, and to suggest that his 'humanistic' interests were a function of his knowledge and appreciation of St. Augustine.

If our examination of Petrarch's debt to St. Augustine's theology obliges us to reconsider our understanding of his humanism, however, we are also compelled to re-evaluate his role in the history of early humanistic thought in Italy. Although Petrarch was widely celebrated by subsequent generations, and has often been presented as the foundational figure of Italian humanism by modern scholars, we have seen that his thought differed from that of later humanists in an often radical fashion. In regard to

the relative importance of the intellect and the will, the value of the solitary life, the role of friendship, and the relationship between eloquence and philosophy, Petrarch stood at a considerable distance from humanistic figures such as Giovanni Boccaccio, Coluccio Salutati, Pier Paolo Vergerio, Lorenzo Valla, and Gasparo Contarini, albeit in different ways and to different extents. But in each case, those respects in which Petrarch's thought diverged most significantly from that of other humanists are closely related to his understanding of St. Augustine's theology and to the manner in which he applied the saint's writings to classical literature.

On the one hand, while the humanists we have considered all looked to St. Augustine's works for inspiration, they drew from different texts, and derived different—though equally valid—interpretations of the saint's thought. Whereas Petrarch appears to have taken most from Augustine's early, introspective works—particularly the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*—humanists such as Salutati and Valla seem to have paid greater heed to his anti-Manichean dialogues (such as the *De libero arbitrio*) and his later, more fideistic writings (such as the *De civitate Dei*). And while Petrarch seems to have prioritised the intellect as a result of his reading of St. Augustine, Salutati and Valla appear to have based their stress on the pre-eminence of the will on precisely the same authority, at least in part, with no less justification.

On the other hand, while the humanists were of one mind in bringing Augustine's theology to bear on their reading of classical literature, they did so in different ways. Whereas Petrarch seems to have been willing to read classical literature almost teleologically, through the lens of St. Augustine's early and most introspective works, and to have quoted from ancient texts in an essentially gnomic fashion, it appears that the other humanists we have examined did not share the same attitude, and were not only more inclined to pay greater attention to the original meaning of classical philosophy, but were also prepared to view ancient thought and Augustinian theology as being of almost equal validity in certain respects.

Recognising Petrarch's distinctive use of St. Augustine, two important, but related, questions present themselves. First, given Petrarch's rather unique understanding of St. Augustine, how far is meaningful to regard him as a foundational figure in the history of Italian humanism? Despite the lavish praise which later humanists were prepared to heap upon him, it seems that the impact which his works may have exerted on later attitudes towards moral questions was either extremely limited, or based on wilful or unconscious misinterpretation. As a conse-

quence, is it more useful to think of Petrarch more as a symbol than as an intellectual trendsetter? Second, if Petrarch's engagement with moral questions differed from that of later humanists, and differed most significantly with respect to his use of St. Augustine, how useful is it to speak of 'humanism' merely in terms of an enthusiasm for classical literature, and how meaningful is it to apply such a designation to authors who differed dramatically with regard to the manner in which they viewed ancient texts? Using attitudes towards St. Augustine as a yardstick, is it more useful to speak of several different, competing, 'humanisms' in Italy, each with a different character?

Although such questions are of undoubted importance to our understanding of the origin of Renaissance humanism in Italy, this is perhaps not the place in which to offer unequivocal answers: given the nature of this study, it may be that the most we can hope to do is to stimulate further debate. If nothing else, it is hoped that a greater appreciation of Petrarch's debt to St. Augustine will stimulate a new spirit of enquiry in examining early humanism. Opening Petrarch's works with an awareness of the Augustinian roots of his thought in mind, perhaps it will be possible for scholars to stand on the summit of their own Mont Ventoux, and to look on the world of humanism with new eyes.



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## INDEX

Some individuals (most notably Petrarch, Augustine, and Cicero) and concepts (particularly *virtus*) are mentioned so frequently in this volume that it would be impractical to indicate every occasion on which they are discussed. For the sake of convenience, however, I have given references for those occasions on which specific works by Petrarch, Augustine, and Cicero are given particular attention.

- Abbarbagliati, Giovanni degli, 209  
 Abelard, Peter, 326  
 Abraham, 207  
 Acciaiuoli, Niccolò, 229  
*accidia, acedia, ἀχθία*, 27, 63, 67–8, 90, 92, 118, 121, 122, 123, 130, 131, 133, 137, 249  
 Acheron, river, 136  
*aegritudo*, 68  
 Aelred of Rievaulx, St., 143–4, 245, 246, 251–2, 253, 262  
 Aeneas, 66, 185n, 243n  
 Agli, Antonio degli, 134  
 Alberti, Leon Battista, 169  
 Alcaeus, 249  
 Alvarus Pelagius, 131  
 Alvarus Peraldus, 133  
 Ambrose, St., 2, 126, 233, 234n, 244–5, 246, 247, 270, 273, 275, 299  
*amicitia*, friendship, 24, 28–9, 165, 171, 187n, 229–75, 352, 354  
*amor*, love, 6, 67, 68, 78, 79, 81, 82–3, 89, 90, 95, 100, 105, 114, 115, 123, 147, 148, 181, 184–5, 194, 196, 197, 198, 203, 205, 211, 215, 218, 222, 233, 236–7, 238–40, 242–4, 245–55, 258–9, 261–2, 263, 264, 266, 269, 270, 272, 273–4, 275, 286, 298, 303, 304, 305, 310, 315–6, 317, 318, 319, 320, 324, 328, 330, 331, 332, 352  
*amore perfetto*, 231  
 Anacreon, 249  
 Andrea, Giovanni d', 35  
 Angilbert of Corbie, 326  
 Anselm of Bec, 262  
 Anthony, St., 33  
 Apollo, 48, 301  
 Aquinas, St. Thomas, 68, 138, 220, 224, 225, 324, 326  
 Archytas of Tarentum, 260  
 Arentino, Federigo, 66  
 Arezzo, Giovanni d', 38  
 Arezzo, Tommaso d', 134  
 Aristotle, 39, 63–4, 81–2, 102, 104, 215, 219–25, 227, 233, 235, 236, 237n, 239, 283, 289, 299, 313–18, 344–5, 349, 350  
 Aristotelianism, Aristotelians, 81, 121, 159, 219, 220, 224, 225, 227, 262, 280, 285, 313, 314, 323, 329, 334, 342  
*ars dictaminis*, 18, 278  
*ars predicandi*, 279  
 Augustine, St.  
     *Confessiones*, 2, 5, 6, 8, 13, 16, 19, 31, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38n, 39, 40, 42, 57, 58, 108, 152, 155, 193, 211, 256  
     *De civitate Dei*, 16, 23, 34, 35, 58, 77n, 95, 108, 111, 114, 128n, 146, 148, 152, 155, 157, 165, 192–3, 218, 219, 224, 225, 227, 292, 340, 354  
     *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, 35, 57  
     *De doctrina christiana*, 14, 30, 35, 58, 211, 279, 282, 287n, 289–90, 291, 292, 293, 325–31, 332, 333, 334, 338, 349, 350, 353  
     *De dono perseverantiae*, 111  
     *De gratia Christi et peccato originali*, 35  
     *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 35, 58, 75, 94, 111, 152  
     *De immoratlitate animae*, 55, 57n, 88  
     *De libero arbitrio*, 55, 94, 95, 109–10, 354  
     *De magistro*, 96  
     *De natura et gratia*, 94, 110  
     *De orando Dei*, 34, 35, 258–9  
     *De ordine*, 218  
     *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, 111  
     *De spiritu et littera*, 111  
     *De Trinitate*, 35, 39, 58, 63, 218, 247, 291n  
     *De utilitate credendi*, 108–9  
     *De vera religione*, 9, 23, 26, 29, 34, 40, 44, 55, 57, 60, 70, 71, 73, 78–9, 80, 81, 84, 88, 89, 94, 95, 96, 108, 122n, 125n, 127, 145, 147, 148, 151, 152, 164, 165, 167, 193,

- 194, 195, 200, 201, 213, 218, 219, 225,  
226, 249, 251, 252, 351, 354  
*Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 9, 27, 35, 36,  
40, 57, 127, 145n, 146, 147, 148n, 149,  
218, 292  
*Epistles*, 35, 58, 245, 258–9  
*Retractiones*, 35, 58, 110–11  
*Rule*, 262  
*Sermones*, 35, 58  
*Soliloquies*, 9, 23, 26, 34, 35, 38, 55, 57,  
59n, 60, 73, 78, 79–80, 84, 88–9, 95,  
96, 108, 109, 147, 202, 213, 218, 219, 225,  
226, 234n, 311n, 351, 354  
*Tractatus CXXIV in Iohannis*  
*Evangelium*, 35, 58  
'Augustinian Renaissance', 27, 55–7  
Augustinus (character from the *Secretum*),  
16–17, 67, 69, 70, 72, 74–5, 77, 78, 79,  
80, 84, 85, 87, 89, 90–1, 92, 93, 95, 109,  
118–20, 124, 150, 152, 249, 284  
Avignon, 34, 57, 173, 184  
  
Baiae, 143, 172, 176  
Barbaro, Ermolao, 169  
Baron, Hans, 11, 38n, 43, 44n, 70–3, 74, 77,  
81, 84, 85, 86, 89, 169–70, 277n  
Barrili, Giovanni, 229  
Benedict, St., 123, 181  
*benevolentia*, 235, 239, 245, 246–7, 258  
Bernard of Clairvaux, St., 123, 127, 133n, 139,  
141, 142–3, 149, 151, 182, 208, 234  
Billanovich, Giuseppe, 34, 36n, 40, 292,  
324n  
Bloom, Harold, 50  
Boccaccio, Giovanni, 36, 45, 47, 48, 50, 149,  
232, 265, 266–71, 272, 273, 283, 354  
*Decameron*, 232, 266–71  
Boethius, 30, 38, 78, 103, 114, 220, 228–9,  
288, 291, 311, 323, 324, 353  
*De consolatione philosophiae*, 38, 78, 114,  
288, 291n, 311, 323  
Bonaiuti, Andrea, 123  
Bonaventure, St., 324  
Bonner, Gerald, 111  
Borgo San Sepolcro, Dionigi da, 31, 34, 66,  
67  
Bosco, Umberto, 10, 35n, 41, 161, 162n, 163,  
230  
Bouwsmas, William, 11, 70, 74–5, 86  
Bracciolini, Poggio, 107, 288  
Bradwardine, Thomas, 56, 57  
Bruni, Leonardo, 169, 220, 221, 343  
Bruno, St., 141, 151  
Burckhardt, Jacob, 4–5, 6  
  
Cabassoles, Philippe de, 159, 173, 174, 175,  
177, 186, 202, 233, 240, 242, 255, 264  
Calcaterra, Carlo, 10–11, 43, 69–70  
*caritas*, charity, 100–1, 104, 147, 222, 224,  
235–6, 245, 246–7, 248n, 258, 270, 272,  
275  
Carmichael, Elizabeth D. H., 230  
Carrara, Francesco il Vecchio da, 238, 240,  
252  
Carthage, 290  
Carusio, Barolomeo, bishop of Urbino,  
35, 55  
Cassian, St. John, 123, 130, 131  
Cassiciacum, 201  
Cassiodorus, 288, 291, 323, 324, 326, 332  
Catullus, 174n, 249  
Celestine V, Pope, 181  
charity, see *caritas*  
Charles IV of Luxembourg, emperor, 231  
Chiapelli, Carolyn, 34  
Christ, Jesus, 33, 48, 53, 93, 125, 128, 129,  
132, 145, 165, 181, 191, 193, 195, 199, 202,  
203, 204, 208, 244, 252, 253, 254, 255,  
262, 264, 273, 298, 299, 301, 302, 309  
Chrysippus, 172  
Cicero, Marcus Tullius  
*De amicitia*, 234, 235–7, 238, 242, 243,  
244, 245, 246, 247, 248n, 254, 255, 256,  
257, 258, 260, 261, 265  
*De finibus*, 44, 75, 76  
*De inventione*, 279, 286, 289, 320, 321,  
322  
*De natura deorum*, 44  
*De officiis*, 86, 120, 235, 253  
*De oratore*, 279, 286, 319, 320, 321, 322,  
325, 329n  
*De re publica*, 56, 235  
*Ep. ad Atticum*, 1, 24, 52  
*Hortensius*, 19, 39, 55, 57, 59, 317, 351  
*Orator*, 279, 286, 319, 321, 322, 329n  
*Pro Archia*, 1  
*Somnium Scipionis*, 64  
*Topica*, 289  
*Tusculan Disputations*, 44, 75, 87, 88,  
138n, 167, 195n, 202n, 235, 248–51, 252,  
256, 310n, 351, 353  
Clement of Alexandria, St., 131  
Cocytus, river, 136  
cognition, 74–81, 93, 96, 97, 99, 100, 103,  
112, 150, 155, 212, 213, 217  
see also intellect, *ratio*  
Colonna, Giacomo, 44, 58, 59, 60, 184, 231,  
326  
Colonna, Giovanni, 57n, 175 n., 243, 257

- Constable, Giles, 115, 149, 163  
 Constantine, Donation of, 341–2  
 Contarini, Cardinal Gasparo, 265, 273–5, 354  
 Courcelle, Pierre, 40  
*cursus*, 292  
 Curtius, Ernst Robert, 283, 312  
 Cynics, 147  
 Cyprian, St., 206
- Datini, Francesco di Marco, 232  
 David, 299, 301, 302  
 David of Augsburg, 68  
 Democritus, 315  
 demons, *daemones*, 126, 127, 128–34, 135, 137, 140, 148  
 Demosthenes, 207, 216  
 De Sanctis, Francesco, 4  
 dialectic, dialecticians, 9, 85, 86, 282–3, 285, 308, 309, 311, 323, 343, 345–6, 350  
 Dido, 243n  
*dissidio*, 6, 8, 10, 40
- Elijah, 207  
 eloquence, 5, 11, 13, 14, 15, 24, 25, 29–30, 36, 42, 51, 53, 61, 277–350, 352–3, 354  
   see also rhetoric  
 Enenkel, Karl, 165, 167, 168n  
 Ennius, 123, 145n, 296, 297  
 Epicureanism, 25, 28, 46, 65n, 76, 87, 105, 163, 164, 165, 166, 170, 171–2, 174, 176, 177, 178, 180–1, 182, 183, 184, 186, 187, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 199, 200, 201, 203, 204, 208, 212, 219, 221, 222, 223, 225, 226, 310, 347  
 Epicurus, 76, 222, 242, 310, 315  
 Eppelsheimer, Hanns, 8, 41n  
 Eugenius IV, Pope, 343  
*euthymia*, 142, 143  
 Evagrius, 123, 130, 131, 145
- faith, *fides*, 15, 23, 26, 27, 39, 41, 46, 54, 55, 56, 59, 60, 63, 70, 72, 73, 95, 106, 108, 109, 112, 128, 147, 154, 225, 274, 339, 347  
*felicitas*, happiness, 26, 27, 32, 33, 53, 63–9, 74–6, 77, 78, 79, 80–1, 83, 94, 100, 101, 105, 110, 113, 119, 121, 122, 124, 125, 129, 130, 134, 135, 138, 144, 148, 150, 151, 162, 175, 181, 195, 197, 199–201, 202, 203–4, 212, 221, 223, 237, 260, 286, 291, 314, 351  
 Fenzi, Enrico, 71  
 Ficino, Marsilio, 1, 12  
 fideism, 11, 18, 22, 23, 26, 43, 55, 57, 58, 60, 61, 69–70, 72, 73, 152, 213, 351, 354
- Firenze, Jacopo da, 235  
 Fisher, John, 168  
 foreknowledge, 106, 111–2  
 Fortunatianus, 288, 292, 324  
 Fortune, *fortuna*, 68, 76, 78, 118, 122, 130, 181, 184, 211, 229, 238, 242, 254  
 Foscolo, Ugo, 4  
 Fouquet, Jean, 133n  
 Francis of Assisi, St., 139, 186, 188, 210–11  
 Franciscus (character from the *Secretum*), 16, 37, 67–9, 70, 71, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 84–5, 89, 90–1, 92–3, 95, 96, 118–21, 122, 130, 137, 249, 284  
 friendship, see *amicitia*
- Galateo, Antonio, 169  
 Gerosa, Pietro Paolo, 9, 40, 145n, 200n  
 Giustiniani, Tommaso, 273, 274, 275  
 Gouwens, Kenneth, 232  
 grace, 23, 27, 41, 46, 55, 56, 58, 70, 72, 73, 75, 90–6, 97, 100, 101–2, 105, 106, 107, 108, 110–12, 136, 144, 148, 150, 152, 154, 155, 156, 157, 212, 217, 317, 320, 329  
 Gray, Hanna, 277, 278, 313, 316  
 Greene, Thomas, 22  
 Gregory of Nazianzus, St., 141, 151  
 Gregory of Rimini, 56, 57  
 Gregory the Great, St., 2, 130, 137, 141, 142, 313  
   *Moralia*, 142  
 Grosseteste, Robert, 130  
 Guidi, Roberto, count of Battifolle, 11, 335–6
- happiness, see *felicitas*  
 heaven, 33, 64, 65, 100, 131, 135, 136, 184, 197, 199, 209, 255, 256, 260, 302  
 Heitmann, Klaus, 11, 16, 18, 41, 70, 72  
 Hilarion, St., 139  
 Hildebrand dei Conti, bishop of Padua, 255–6  
 Hitalingen, Johannes, 56  
 Homer, 43, 45, 232, 300, 301, 311, 329  
 homiletics, 130, 289, 290, 309, 325 n., 326, 327  
 Horace, 2, 24, 28, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 119, 124, 162, 173, 174, 180, 182, 192, 206, 240, 241, 283, 315, 316, 337 n., 351  
   *Epistulae*, 119n, 206  
   *Satires*, 162, 173–4, 179n, 180, 241n  
 Hugh of St. Victor, 68, 127, 310n, 323, 326  
 Humbert of Romans, 290  
 Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, 168  
 Hyatte, Reginald, 230, 235, 245

- Ibycus of Rhegium, 249  
*imitatio*, imitation, 3, 4, 9, 11, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 28, 46–54, 60, 134, 164, 178, 182, 200, 201, 249, 256, 275, 284, 304, 321, 333  
 Incisa, Giovanni d', 229  
 intellect, intellection, 4, 89, 94, 95, 96, 97–100, 102–5, 106, 107, 108, 109, 112, 129n, 155, 199, 202, 203, 204, 212, 214, 216–17, 218, 219, 220, 221, 223, 224, 226, 272, 301, 313, 316, 338, 345, 351, 354  
   see also cognition, *ratio*  
*inventio*, 49, 346  
 Isidore of Seville, St., 130, 288, 299, 309n, 324, 326, 332  
 Italy, 1, 3, 23, 31, 66, 173, 231n, 267, 278, 353, 355  
 Jacob, 207, 341  
 Jeremiah, 299  
 Jerome, St., 2, 53, 122, 137, 138 n., 139, 141, 181, 208, 254, 255, 289 n., 299, 310, 339, 348  
 Jerrold, Maud, 7  
 Job, 299  
 Jordan, river, 301, 302  
 Journi, Jean de, 130  
 Juno, 341  
 Jupiter, 341  
 Juvenal, 25, 46, 114, 171, 176, 178, 179–80, 192, 219, 241, 257–8  
   *Satires*, 25, 114, 171, 176, 178, 179–80, 241, 257–8  
 Kahn, Victoria, 72, 217, 218, 219  
 Kallendorf, Craig, 66  
 Kempen, Ludwig van ('Socrates'), 174, 175, 231, 239, 254  
 Kierkegaard, Søren, 169  
 Klenkok, Johannes, 56  
 Körting, Gustav, 7  
 Kristeller, Paul Oskar, 11–13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 30, 42, 114, 149, 169, 277–8, 332, 333, 343  
 Lactantius, 128n, 141, 151, 289, 291, 297, 312, 323, 330  
 'Laelius' (friend of Petrarch), see Tosetti, Lello di Pietro Stefano dei  
 Laelius, Gaius, 231n, 234, 236, 237, 238, 242, 243, 246, 256  
 Lafleur, Claude, 231, 234  
 Laura, 64, 90, 115, 120, 184, 185, 196, 197, 198  
 Lethe, river, 136  
 Liège, 1  
 Lille, Alain de, 290  
 Lione, Floro di, 35, 58  
 Livy, 1, 33, 45, 47, 48, 123, 143, 145n, 238n  
 logic, 288, 324, 344, 345  
 Lokaj, Rodney, 114, 149  
 Lovati, Lovato di, 18, 280, 322  
 Lucan, 302  
 Lucca, Niccolò da, 237  
 Luther, Martin, 27, 91, 92, 95  
 Lydgate, John, 168  
 Macarius, St., 141  
 Mack, Peter, 344, 346  
 Maffei, Raffaele, 134  
 Maggi, Armando, 164, 165, 166, 169  
 Manicheanism, 94, 108, 109, 110, 112, 129n, 213, 218, 224, 226, 351, 354  
 Maramaldo, Guglielmo, 238  
 Marrou, Henri-Irénée, 325, 331  
 Martellotti, Guido, 43, 163, 178, 187n  
 Martial, 171n, 176  
 Martinelli, Bortolo, 44n, 71  
 Massa Alidosi, Iacopo della, 341  
 Massinissa (character in the *Africa*), 237n, 239  
 Maugain, Gabriel, 231  
 Maurus, Rabanus, 290, 326  
 Maximus, St., 141  
 Mazzei, Lapo, 232  
 Mazzeo, Joseph, 14, 282, 290  
 McLaughlin, Martin, 22  
 medicine, 215, 216, 217, 282, 307–9  
*meditatio mortis*, 16, 26, 64, 71, 74–81, 84–90, 92, 93, 108, 112, 124, 138–9, 140, 144, 149, 151, 152, 155, 195, 212, 310, 352  
 Messina, Tommaso da, 49, 284, 302, 304, 327  
 metempsychosis, 315  
 Milan, 38, 175, 201, 211, 290, 325  
*Millequium S. Patris Augustini*, 35, 55–6, 57  
 Montaigne, Michel de, 169  
 Montrieux, 32n, 115, 116, 126, 132, 133, 138, 144, 149, 160, 231, 301  
 Moses, 207, 299  
 Murphy, James, 289  
 Mussato, Albertino, 18, 280, 322  
 Nelli, Francesco, 239, 252  
 Neoplatonism, 12, 57, 58, 60, 73, 290  
 Nolhac, Pierre de, 6, 37, 40, 176n



- Oberman, Heiko, 55  
*occultas*, 159, 164, 165, 166, 170, 178–82, 186, 190, 191, 192–5, 199, 200, 201, 203, 204, 205, 305, 352  
 Orsini, Francesco, 239  
 Orvieto, Ugolino of, 56  
*otium*, 24, 27–8, 113–57, 161, 166, 170, 183, 203, 211–12, 213, 226, 239, 259, 260, 262, 264, 352  
*otium negotiosum*, 118–24, 137, 140, 146, 147  
*otium otiosum*, 118–24, 130, 137, 149  
 Ovid, 25, 56, 120n, 123, 124, 174n, 185, 196–7, 198, 206, 219, 249  
*Ars amatoria*, 25  
*Metamorphoses*, 196, 206
- Palmieri, Matteo, 169  
 Panizza, Letizia, 220, 224  
 Parma, 173  
 Pascal, Blaise, 169  
 Paul, St., 33, 107, 224, 248, 251, 252  
*paupertas*, poverty, 114, 153, 154, 169, 170, 175, 254, 346  
 Pelagius, Pelagianism, 23, 55, 56, 57, 58, 75, 93, 94, 95, 101, 110, 111, 112  
 Peripateticism, 14, 18, 25, 41, 46, 54, 61, 110, 221, 227, 281, 285  
 Peter, St., 181  
 Peter Damian, St., 209, 210  
 Petrarca, Gherardo, 31–2, 43, 45, 115, 153, 298–303, 311  
 Petrarch, Francesco  
*Africa*, 1, 29, 64–5, 237, 238, 243n, 246, 280, 293, 294, 295–6, 297, 298, 302, 304, 327  
*Canzoniere*, 28, 38, 71, 120n, 137n, 167, 183–5, 188, 195, 196–9, 205  
 Coronation Oration, 29, 280, 293, 296–7, 298, 304, 312, 327, 330  
*De otio religioso*, 27–8, 37, 39, 61, 113–57, 160–1, 163, 166, 167, 169, 170, 207, 211, 226, 233, 249, 259, 263, 332, 352  
*De remediis utriusque fortune*, 29, 41, 118, 122, 124, 168, 233, 234n, 238–9, 240, 241–2, 246, 247–51, 254, 256n, 261, 265, 279, 280, 304, 305–6, 319, 321, 324, 328  
*De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, 29, 39, 53, 63–4, 81–4, 85, 234n, 280, 283, 285, 286, 293, 313–18, 329, 330  
*De viris illustribus*, 43, 238, 297  
*De vita solitaria*, 28–9, 35n, 41, 46, 52, 118n, 159–227, 233, 259–65, 279, 305, 328, 332, 352  
*Eclogues*, 43, 45, 231n, 298, 300–2, 311, 337
- Exul ab Italia*, 173–4, 205  
*Familiares*, general, 10, 29, 42, 44, 51, 71, 204, 206, 231, 233, 235, 246  
 discussion of specific letters, I, 1, 324n; I, 8, 49; I, 9, 303–4, 305; II, 1, 242–3, 255; II, 3, 65n; II, 6, 243–4, 255; II, 9, 44, 58–60, 326; III, 15, 234n, 241; IV, 1, 2, 31–4; IV, 2, 66; IV, 3, 235; V, 10, 173n; VI, 3, 257–8; VII, 11, 229; IX, 4, 240; IX, 10, 174n; IX, 11, 237–8, 248; X, 4, 43–4, 45, 293, 298–303, 311, 327, 329, 337; XI, 4, 177; XII, 2, 229; XII, 4, 252; XII, 16, 229; XII, 17, 229; XV, 9, 137n; XV, 14, 255; XVI, 6, 174–5, 177; XVII, 5, 175–6; XVII, 10, 38; XVIII, 3, 36, 149; XVIII, 8, 239; XIX, 4, 231; XXI, 9, 254–5; XXI, 15, 256n; XXII, 2, 45, 48; XXII, 10, 36; XXIII, 19, 50; XXIV, 2, 51–2; XXIV, 3, 52; XXIV, 4, 51; XXIV, 5, 52; XXIV, 7, 291; XXIV, 9, 51; XXIV, 11, 51  
*Historia Griseldis*, 168  
*Invective contra medicum*, 29, 44, 66, 83–4, 121–2, 123, 124, 125, 126, 161, 280, 282–3, 285, 286, 291, 292, 293, 306–13, 314, 323, 324, 327, 330  
*Posteritati* (*Sen.* XVIII, 1), 44, 178n, 280, 284, 294, 295  
*Psalmi penitentiales*, 168  
*Rerum memorandarum libri*, 117–18, 161, 326n  
*Secretum*, 2, 9, 10–11, 13, 16, 24, 26–7, 37, 38, 42, 43, 45, 61, 63–112, 116, 117, 118–21, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 130, 133n, 135, 137, 150–1, 152, 166, 168n, 211, 212, 226, 249, 252, 256, 259, 263, 265, 284, 286, 295, 310, 326, 332, 352  
*Seniles*, general, 29, 233, 235, 246  
 discussion of specific letters, I, 3, 239; IV, 5, 66; VI, 9, 133n; XI, 5, 238; XI, 6, 239; XI, 10, 121n; XIV, 1, 238, 240, 253; XV, 3, 213; XVI, 1, 39; XVI, 4, 240, 248; XVIII, 1, 319; see also *Posteritati*  
*Triumphus cupidinis*, 231  
*Triumphus mortis*, 64  
 Phlegethon, river, 136  
 Pilatus, Leontius, 232  
 Plato, Platonism, 53, 55, 58, 59, 76, 84, 108, 122n, 139, 220, 249, 250n, 284, 290, 310, 315  
 Pollio, Asinius, 51  
 Pomponius Mela, 33

- Ponte, Giovanni, 71  
 poverty, see *paupertas*  
 prayer, 27, 28, 90, 95–6, 181, 182, 207, 210, 211  
 predestination, 101–2, 105–6, 111–12  
 Propertius, 173, 249  
 Prosper of Aquitaine, 299  
 Prudentius, 299  
*Psalms*, 43, 124–7, 140, 142, 145, 147, 301  
 Pseudo-Basilus, 165  
 Pythagoras, 252–3, 254, 315
- Querini, Vincenzo, 275  
 Quillen, Carol, 20–1, 41, 72, 326  
 Quintilian, 30, 182, 183, 206, 223, 279, 288, 290, 291, 324, 325, 327, 332, 345, 348, 349, 353
- Rawski, Conrad, 164–5, 292  
*ratio*, reason, reasoning, 11, 26, 41, 54, 55, 56, 58, 71, 73, 84–90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97–103, 108–10, 131, 136, 138, 139, 140, 142, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 155, 195, 196, 198, 199, 202, 203, 204, 205, 210, 211, 212, 215, 219, 226, 249, 263, 264, 282, 285, 289, 309, 351, 352  
 see also cognition, intellect  
*res aliena*, 28, 181, 189–204  
 rhetoric, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 29, 30, 42, 82, 277–350  
 see also eloquence  
 Rho, Antonio da, 103, 105, 106, 222, 223, 224, 347  
 Rico, Francisco, 11, 40, 43, 44n, 70–3, 74, 77, 81, 86, 89  
 Rimini, Floriano da, 238  
 Robert, king of Naples, 235  
 Robert of Basevorn, 290  
 Romagno, Antonio da, 170  
 Romualdus, St., 209–10  
 Rossi, Vittorio, 32n, 35n  
*rus-urbs*, 28, 119, 120, 161–2, 164, 170, 171–78, 182–6, 191, 204, 212, 352
- Sallust, 123, 143, 145n  
 Salutati, Coluccio, 1, 19, 28, 96, 97–102, 104, 105, 106–12, 113–14, 115, 127–8, 153–7, 168, 169, 170, 213–20, 225, 226, 227, 265, 271–3, 275, 280, 293, 334–41, 343, 347, 349, 350, 354  
*De fato et fortuna*, 98, 101, 339n  
*De laboribus Herculis*, 336, 337, 339, 340, 341  
*De nobilitate legum et medicinae*, 98, 99, 100, 102, 169, 170, 214, 215–19
- De seculo et religione*, 113–4, 115, 127–8, 153–7, 169, 170  
 Letters, 98, 100, 101, 214–15, 217–20, 272, 335–6, 336–7, 337–8, 339, 340, 341  
 San Miniato, Giovanni di, 337, 341  
*sapientia*, wisdom, 11, 12, 14, 55, 89, 98, 103, 105, 106, 110, 113, 172, 220, 231n, 238, 250, 253, 269, 278, 280, 281, 287, 301, 306, 310, 319, 320, 324, 328, 329, 336–8, 347  
 Sappho, 249  
 Scaglione, Aldo, 230  
 Schalk, Fritz, 41–2, 163, 164  
 Scholasticism, 6, 7, 11, 12, 40, 68, 104, 220, 221, 224, 225, 227, 278, 283, 287n, 308, 344  
 Schopenhaur, Arthur, 169  
 Scipio Africanus, Publius Cornelius, 64, 120, 139n, 216, 231n, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 242, 243, 244, 246, 295, 297, 302  
 Scipio Calvus, Gnaeus Cornelius, 65  
 Scipio, Publius Cornelius, 64–5, 237  
 Sedulius Scotus, 299  
 Seidlmeyer, Michael, 115, 149  
 Seigel, Jerrold, 13–15, 17, 18, 20, 42, 82, 281–2, 283, 284–5, 286, 294, 307, 318, 320, 331, 332, 335, 343  
 self-knowledge, 28, 33, 71, 84–90, 93, 96, 108, 109, 124, 138, 151, 166, 190, 200–1, 212, 217, 219, 249, 252  
 Seneca, 1, 2, 6, 9, 11, 18, 21, 22, 24–6, 28, 46, 49–52, 54, 55, 58, 61, 68, 69, 73, 75–8, 86, 87, 89, 118n, 123, 141–4, 145n, 146, 151, 162, 165, 171, 172, 176, 178, 182–3, 186–7, 189, 191, 219–20, 223, 233–4, 236, 240–2, 243n, 244–7, 254–7, 259–61, 263–5, 267, 269, 283, 315, 316, 333, 351, 352  
 Seta, Lombardo della, 121n, 170, 213  
 Sette, Guido, 175, 177  
 Smalley, Beryl, 56  
 'Socrates' (friend of Petrarch), see Kempen, Ludwig van  
*solitarius*, 120, 121–2, 159, 160, 161, 164, 165, 166, 170, 178, 180–2, 190–1, 192, 195, 201, 204–7, 210, 211, 212, 233, 260, 261, 264, 352  
*solitudo*, solitude, 24, 28, 52, 78, 113, 114, 115, 120, 121, 122, 159–227, 233, 259–65, 305, 352  
*solitudo animi*, 28, 170, 186–9, 191, 193, 201–12, 217, 233, 262  
 Solomon, 299  
 Stoicism, 11, 14, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 41, 43, 46, 52, 54, 55, 58, 60, 61, 64, 69–79, 81, 84–9, 96, 105, 110, 131, 143n,

- 150, 156, 157, 162–7, 170, 171–84, 186–7, 189–93, 199–201, 203, 204, 208, 212, 219, 221–6, 234, 241, 250, 256, 261, 262, 263, 271, 281, 284, 285, 286, 317, 328, 347, 351
- Strada, Zanobi da, 229, 279
- Styx, river, 136
- Suetonius, 299
- Syphax (character in the *Africa*), 139n, 237
- Tartarus, 136
- Tatham, Edward, 7, 8, 36n
- Thagaste, 290
- Themistius, 289
- Three Enemies of Man, 127, 130, 137, 140, 149, 150, 352
- Tibullus, 174n, 249
- Tolstoy, Leo, 169
- Tonelli, Luigi, 7, 8
- Tosetti, Lello di Pietro Stefano dei ('Laelius'), 231, 238
- Trinkaus, Charles, 15–18, 20, 21, 27, 42, 70, 72, 74, 82, 86, 91–3, 96–7, 107, 114, 149, 163, 169, 230n, 282–6, 287n, 294, 307–9, 312, 313, 316, 318, 331, 332, 343
- Tripet, Arnaud, 161, 163, 189, 190, 200
- Troy, 66
- truth, see *veritas*
- Ullman, Berthold, 37, 107, 271, 341
- utor* and *fuor*, 124
- '*vacate et videte*', 124–5, 140, 142, 143, 146, 148, 163
- vacatio*, 27, 28, 124–5, 126, 127, 140, 142–4, 145–7, 150, 161, 211, 352
- Valerius Maximus, 1, 234
- Valla, Lorenzo, 1, 96, 97, 102–12, 113, 128, 134, 169, 170, 213, 220–7, 280, 293, 334, 341–50, 354
- Annotationes in errores Antonii Raudensis*, 342, 347, 349
- Collatio Novi Testamenti*, 342, 349
- De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione*, 104, 342
- De libero arbitrio*, 102, 103, 104, 105–6, 111
- De vero falsoque bono*, 342, 344, 347
- De voluptate*, 104, 105, 220–26, 227
- Dialecticarum Disputationum Libri III*, 343
- Elegantiae linguae Latinae*, 342, 344–5, 347–8
- Encomium S. Thomae*, 342
- Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*, 102–3, 104, 105, 342, 344, 345–6
- Varro, Marcus, 36, 147, 299, 341
- Vatia, Servilius, 118, 187n
- Vaucluse, 38n, 159, 173–7, 184, 185n, 187, 196, 204, 205, 208, 210, 260
- Vegio, Maffeo, 221–4
- Ventoux, Mt., 2, 5, 9, 13, 31–3, 37, 39, 355
- Venus, 66
- Vergerio, Pier Paolo, 168, 216, 354
- veritas*, truth, 6, 14, 30, 40, 53, 55, 58, 59–60, 67, 79–80, 81–6, 88–9, 94, 103, 108–9, 125–8, 129n, 133, 134, 139, 140, 144, 146–7, 150–1, 159, 160, 164n, 166, 178, 191, 195, 198, 199, 202–4, 211, 247, 253, 260, 269, 272, 274, 281, 282, 283, 285, 289, 292–300, 302–4, 306–7, 309–13, 315, 316, 318, 320–1, 323, 324, 325, 327–32, 337–41, 344, 346, 348, 351, 352, 353
- Verona, 1, 52
- Vetuli, Niccolò di Paolo dei, 174–5, 177
- Vicenza, Pulice da, 51
- Vickers, Brian, 116, 122, 130, 294n
- Victorinus, 292
- Virgil, 1, 2, 6, 9, 21, 24, 28, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 51, 56, 66, 89, 114, 162, 176, 177, 178, 182, 185n, 196, 206, 243, 279, 300, 301, 302, 303, 311, 329, 336, 339, 351
- vita activa*, 27–8, 100, 113, 117, 143, 156–7, 161, 162, 169, 170, 171, 177, 178, 183, 186, 189–92, 200, 203, 212–20, 223, 225–7
- vita contemplativa*, 27–8, 52, 113, 117, 143, 156–7, 161–5, 169, 170–2, 174, 176–8, 180, 182, 183, 186, 188, 189, 191–2, 201, 203, 212–27, 263
- Vitry, Jacques de, 130
- Voigt, Georg, 5, 6, 40
- voluntas*, will, 16, 23, 25, 26, 41, 55, 56, 70–84, 91–112, 114, 127, 128, 150, 154–7, 172, 189, 191, 213, 216–19, 223–5, 226, 249, 272, 283–6, 313, 316, 344–5, 354
- voluptas*, pleasure, 32–4, 59, 63–9, 75–6, 80, 89–90, 105, 123, 126, 136, 138–9, 142, 145–8, 150–1, 166, 193–4, 197, 199, 200, 221–5, 227, 237, 238, 248, 295, 304
- Ward, John, 278
- will, see *voluntas*
- William of Conches, 323, 325
- Wilkins, Ernest Hatch, 43, 229–30
- wisdom, see *sapientia*
- Witt, Ronald, 18–20, 21, 101, 107, 114, 116, 135n, 142, 214, 216, 280, 287n, 322, 335

Zabarella, Francesco, 168

Zacharie, Johannes, 56

Zambeccari, Pellegrino, 113, 214–19

Zeitlin, Jacob, 162–3, 187n, 188, 189, 191,  
200, 259

Zeno, 172

Zonarini, Giuliano, 98, 339, 340